

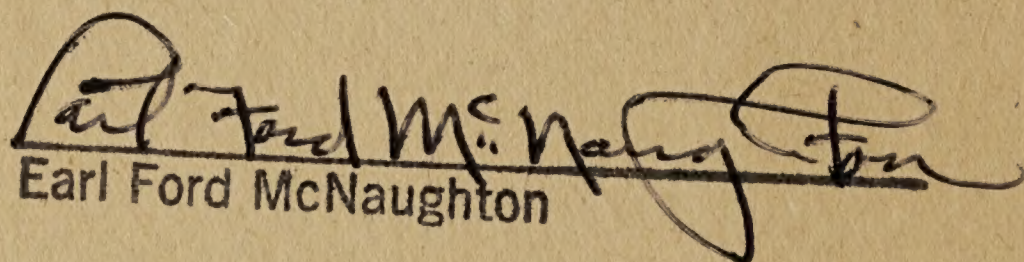
In the Camp of the Delawares



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From Mother.

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To Kenneth
From Mother.



He started off on the trail to the
Delaware village

IN THE CAMP OF THE DELAWARES

BY
JAMES A. BRADEN

FRONTISPIECE BY
W. H. FRY



THE SAALFIELD PUBLISHING COMPANY
CHICAGO AKRON, OHIO NEW YORK
MADE IN U. S. A.

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IN THE CAMP OF THE DELAWARES

CHAPTER I

OFF TO FORT PITT

John Jerome and Return Kingdom, the two rugged boy pioneers living in the log cabin on the banks of the Cuyahoga River in the Northwest Territory—what was then the wild frontier—sat at the foot of the hollow poplar tree which was the temporary shelter of Jerome. He was accused of the killing of Lone-Elk through witchcraft, and until the mystery could be solved, Jerome was facing a serious situation.

After a long discussion of Lone-Elk's probable relations with the white man so evidently connected with the second mystery—a wanton murder of two whites at a salt lick near Ma-

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honing Town, related in *The Trail of the Seneca*, Kingdom at last arose, saying:

“I’ll be getting back, John. Now you gather up your things for we will soon have to separate. Here is the pouch of powder I’ve brought, for both of us must be prepared for any emergency. Take good care of it, for you may need it before you get back.”

Not only had Ree brought ammunition but also quite a supply of cooked provisions. Both boys realized that, situated as they were, neither knew exactly when it would be safe for them to be seen together. It was wise, therefore, for them to be so equipped that each would be in fit shape to sustain himself while away from the cabin, and obliged to maintain himself for an indefinite period.

“You are always so thoughtful, Ree! With what I’ve now got, I’ll do very well for a week, if necessary. We’ll both keep our eyes open for Lone-Elk, who is just as liable to follow me—that is, if he strikes my trail or gets suspicious in any way—as to hang around the cabin.”

With a few more words the two separated, Kingdom striking back towards their cabin home, while John set out circuitously to strike the trail leading southeastward towards Pittsburg and the locality where Mad Anthony and his men were camped near the Ohio River.

John Jerome, using much caution lest he make too broad a trail, and keeping to an unfrequented route, traveled diligently for an hour or more. No sign or sound did he see or hear. The woods were quiet except for the chirp of birds, the cries of wild fowl, and the bark of squirrels, while the sun rose higher and higher until the shadows indicated the hour of noon.

A south breeze and the sun had scattered the mist and the weather gave promise of being fine and warm for many days to come. John felt the influence of nature's brighter aspect at once when fairly under way, and would have looked upon his journey as upon a pleasant holiday had he had Kingdom's company. But that was not to be and he could only resolve to cover as

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much ground as possible every day. As he thought of the object of his journey, too, his interest in it increased and he anticipated with much satisfaction his pride in guiding a small company of soldiers through the woods on the important mission, for which, he was sure, Gen. Wayne would at once cause men to be detailed.

Anxious to avoid a possible meeting with Lone-Elk, the young woodsman traveled with much caution, especially this first day. Later, when he had left the cabin far behind, he made less effort to conceal his trail and ceased to watch as vigilantly as before. To an accident, as much as to any recklessness on his part, however, was due the sudden ending of John's expectations.

The boy had been three days upon the well-marked trail leading to the Ohio river and thence along that stream to Fort Pitt. It was the evening of his fourth day since parting from Kingdom. He kindled a small fire close beside a large rock, thinking to have some warm meat for supper, then go on a half mile or more

and sleep wherever chance offered. He would thus be well away from the scene by the time his fire attracted attention, if attract attention it should.

John had placed his blanket and other surplus baggage upon the big rock and walked some distance away to gather fine, dry wood. Suddenly a terrific explosion occurred. The young traveler saw his fire go flying in all directions, while a perfect shower of leaves, small sticks and bits of earth was dashed likewise into the air. He knew instantly what had happened. The extra pouch of powder Ree had brought for him had rolled from the big stone directly into the blaze.

There was only one thing to do and that must be done quickly. The tremendous noise of the explosion would be heard for a long distance. So much louder than the report of a rifle was it that if Indians or others were within hearing they would most certainly make immediate investigation. Without losing a moment, therefore, John seized his blanket and other baggage which had been jarred off the stone, but away

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from the fire, fortunately, and rushed away through the woods at high speed.

Now, anyone coming up to the place, drawn thither by the great noise, would be most likely to come by way of the trail, from one direction or the other, John Jerome quite properly reasoned; so, leaving the path at a sharp angle, he struck through the forest to the north.

Fortune plays strange tricks with all of us. The whimsical dame played one on John which he long remembered; for as he ran on and on among the trees, dodging in and out among the bushes in the dim twilight, he almost collided with a party of Indians hurrying almost as fast in one direction as he was fleeing in the other.

CHAPTER II

FISHING BIRD IN TROUBLE

The days were always long to Kingdom when John was gone. From their childhood they had been much together. Even in the time of his bound-boy experience, with a harsh master to serve, Ree had found time for play occasionally only because John helped him with his work. He had never known any other intimate companion; had never cared for any. Now, far from all other friends, he valued John Jerome's friendship all the more and counted the days until the cheerful, helpful lad would be returning.

Yet Kingdom had much to do even while he watched and waited. Lone-Elk frequently hovered near. He had grown more sullen and ugly than at first and Ree had little doubt of the fate the cabin would suffer if the Indian

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were but given a chance to act without danger that he would be discovered. To watch for the Seneca's coming, then, and to keep an eye on him while he flitted about the edge of the clearing, disappearing, reappearing, coming and going like the ominous shadow he was, became as much a daily task as the care of the two horses.

Twice in a week's time Ree found opportunities to visit the vicinity of the mysterious camp in the gully. He saw no one, but he never remained long, for the freshness of the ashes and the altered position of the log in front of them each time were assurance that the tenants were not far away.

It was the lead mine which kept the camp occupied, Kingdom now was certain. The hidden treasure could not be far away. He had no doubt of his ability to find it if but given the chance to make unmolested search.

It was while on little hunting trips into the woods to the north that the boy had visited the strange camping place. Though he made it a

rule never to go a great distance from the cabin, game was plentiful and he rarely, if ever, returned empty-handed. The season for hunting and trapping was now at its beginning. Each taste of its pleasures made the young pioneer long for the end of the trouble with Lone-Elk and a return of the days of security and care-free happiness which both he and John had so much enjoyed in the past. The thought that they would not return—not, at least, until after many days and many dangers that he little anticipated,—did not so much as come to his confident, self-reliant brain.

Not since the “talk” with the Delawares had Kingdom been near Captain Pipe’s village. He seldom left the clearing to go even a little distance in that direction, though often he wished he might do so; often wished he could talk the whole trouble over with Captain Pipe alone; often wished Fishing Bird would come, even if he brought no news. The friendly Delaware, he felt certain, feared for his own safety every time he visited the clearing. He must have

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given up his watching of the Seneca, too. Perhaps he had been warned to do so. Time would tell.

Thinking of these things, thinking of John, thinking of the work before him, Kingdom was busily occupied one afternoon, tying choice ears of corn together by the husks to hang them from the roof poles, when rapid footsteps near the open door caused him to spring hastily up.

“Hello, here! Howdy, little brothers!” he exclaimed heartily, for before him stood Little Wolf and Long-Hair, two Indian boys, both of whom had shown for the young white settlers a warm friendship.

With the true Indian showing of unmoved indifference, the Delaware lads returned the greeting and Kingdom at once led them into the cabin and set before them the choicest bits of meat and bread the larder afforded.

As the youthful braves ate, Ree inquired kindly concerning Captain Pipe, Neohaw and others of the Delawares, and presently asked about Fishing Bird—desired to know if the

spirits prospered him and where he had been so long that his Paleface friends had seen nothing of him.

Ree did not recall the fact at the moment, but he remembered a few seconds later that Long-Hair was a brother of Fishing Bird,—a relationship which soon explained the object of the visit of the Indian lads.

“Fishing Bird—him Long-Hair and Little Wolf come to tell White Fox about,” the former said. “Fishing Bird was hunting. Long-Knives caught him and Long-Knives going to kill Fishing Bird dead.”

“Long-Hair! What are you saying? What do you mean?” cried Kingdom with such solemn but keen earnestness that the Delaware boy was quite startled. “Who will harm Fishing Bird?”

“Yep; just as Long-Hair says,” put in Little Wolf. “Palefaces made Fishing Bird prisoner, where Paleface army is at the River Ohio, and going to kill him.”

“Tell me, brothers, how do you know this?”

Were you sent to tell the White Fox?" asked Ree, calling himself by the name the Indians had long ago given him. "This is terrible news you bring me! It cannot be!"

Both the little redskins slowly nodded their heads in solemn confirmation of all they had said.

"From Fort Pitt a runner came, telling Hop-ocon how Fishing Bird a prisoner is—made a prisoner by Captain Wayne's warriors," said Long-Hair with the air of being a full-fledged warrior himself. "Gentle Maiden said Long-Hair must come fast and tell White Fox."

"Little Wolf come too," said the other youngster, bound to be included.

"You both did just right. Gentle Maiden did right also; for White Fox will not for a great deal let harm come to Fishing Bird, if he can help it," Kingdom briskly replied. "White Fox is going right away to 'Captain' Wayne's men. Little Brothers will go back and tell Gentle Maiden this. Tell Gentle Maiden, and any others who ask, that Fishing Bird shall be

set free if White Fox and Little Paleface can possibly do it."

Even as he spoke, Ree's mind was made up. In fifteen minutes he had saddled Phoebe, turned Neb out to graze and was closing the cabin preparatory to a rapid ride to Wayne's encampment. The Indian boys watched him gallop across the clearing, his rifle hanging before him from the saddle, his powder horn and bullet pouch, both freshly refilled, slung from his shoulder, his blanket and a hastily collected supply of provisions taking the usual place of saddle bags.

"White Fox is a mighty warrior," said Little Wolf admiringly.

"White Fox is too good to be a Paleface. Fishing Bird says the same thing," Long-Hair made answer.

But Lone-Elk and a white man who was with him, crouching in the bushes by the river, watched the young horseman speed into the woods with altogether different feelings.

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Fishing Bird had been a prisoner in the strong, log guard-house more than four days at the time Kingdom dashed away to his rescue. The friendly Delaware, together with three others, had made the journey to the Ohio, drawn thither by curiosity, and perhaps, too, with some expectation of gaining intelligence of the increasing strength of the white commander's forces.

Friendly Indians were coming and going in the vicinity of Wayne's "Legion" constantly, and the Delawares undoubtedly counted upon being classed among the neutral savages. But "Mad Anthony" was not asleep. While he waited to receive new recruits from the east, and drill his men to a point of proper efficiency, before making a start into hostile Indian country, he was constantly informing himself of the doings of the redskins in the interior—in the northwest country, where, he knew, the inevitable battle would eventually be.

Wayne's staff of loyal scouts and trained woodsmen were likewise alert. Every day they

gathered from one source or another some news of the preparations all the northwest tribes were making for a fight, which, they told one another, would sicken the Palefaces more than the defeat of St. Clair had done, and check the advance of the settlers upon their forest lands forever.

Unfortunately for Fishing Bird, it so happened that, just at the time he and his friends were spying about in the vicinity of the white army, Gen. Wayne ordered that some Indian from the interior be brought in and questioned. Six men went out to find and capture such a redskin.

They came upon the little party of Delawares, encamped several miles from the river, just at daybreak. All were sleeping, but they heard the white men stealing upon them, and dashed into the woods without firing a shot. Three made their escape. One was caught and the unhappy Fishing Bird was he.

Matters were made worse for the captive, too, by the redskins who had eluded capture return-

ing and firing upon the white scouts. They intended, no doubt, to assist Fishing Bird to get away. But they caused him only so much the more trouble; for his captors made him bear the brunt of the wrath the hostile act excited in their minds. The still further result was that Fishing Bird, being mistreated, became ugly and obstinate. He refused to talk. He would tell the Palefaces nothing. Let them beat him, abuse and torture him as they would, he bore it all in sullen, defiant silence.

“Chuck him in the guard-house! Starve him! Let him know that he’s got to talk or die! Hang all the rascals, anyhow!” a captain had exclaimed, and the unoffending Delaware was hustled off in no very tender manner.

Gen. Wayne soon learned of what had taken place and caused Fishing Bird to be brought to his own cabin. He talked kindly to the Indian, but the latter was still smarting physically from the injuries, and smarting still more mentally from the bitter injustice of the punishment he had received, and remained obstinate.

“He evidently knows something. If he had nothing to tell he would be talkative enough,” “Mad Anthony” thought, and ordered Fishing Bird taken back to the guard-house. “Let him understand that he will not be harmed if he’ll tell the truth,” he said, “but if he won’t talk—”

In a short time the peaceable redskins in the vicinity learned what had been done with the Delaware and so before a great while the information reached the three warriors who had been his companions. Immediately they carried word to Captain Pipe. The latter was too proud to call upon Return Kingdom to exert himself in Fishing Bird’s behalf, after the manner in which he had allowed the white boy to be treated, but Gentle Maiden did not hesitate. She sent Long-Hair and Little Wolf to the cabin at once.

None of the Indians really knew, however, the many reasons Kingdom had for showing his friendship for Fishing Bird in the latter’s hour of need. They may have known that the two were more than usually friendly, but they did

not guess how the young white settlers had often been assisted by the Delaware; nor did anyone besides Ree and John and Fishing Bird himself know of the terrible struggle in the woods that night two years ago, when Kingdom was so near to killing the young savage.

The circumstances of the capture and detention of Fishing Bird were not, of course, known to Kingdom until he reached Wayne's camp. Indeed, he puzzled his mind a great deal with the subject, as he traveled rapidly along the old trail to the east. Sometimes at a gallop, sometimes at a walk, he kept to the course, but wherever the path would permit of it, he let Phoebe take her fastest gait and urged the docile and only too willing mare on and on.

Ree camped at evening beneath some heavy, overhanging bushes at the foot of a steep hill. The night passed without incident and was followed by a long, hard day in the saddle. Every minute seemed most precious to the anxious boy and every delay of any kind vexed and worried him. He feared constantly that he would reach

his destination too late. The very thought that he would arrive only to learn that the good, loyal Fishing Bird had been put to death filled him with anguish and alarm.

Hardly could Kingdom endure to spend another night in camp. He wished to be pushing forward. The delay of many hours was more than irksome. But he could make little progress in the darkness, he knew, and Phoebe would be the better the next day for the rest. Luckily the weather remained pleasant. Fortune favored him in this respect, at least. The second night of his journey, therefore, Ree spent in a sheltered spot beside a little stream, where a fine growth of grass afforded his horse abundant feed.

Twice in the hour of darkness the lad heard far off an Indian's war-whoop. The sound alarmed him a great deal; not for his own safety so much as for the reason it gave him for believing the trouble along the border was far worse than he had supposed. And such, in

fact, was the case, as the youthful pioneer was soon to learn.

For the time, however, the threatening, distant cries served only to make the solitary traveler somewhat uneasy in his lonely camp. But with the coming of morning, he thought little more of the matter, and it was not until he reached Wayne's outposts and found that John Jerome had not arrived there that the night's disturbing sounds caused him any further anxiety.

CHAPTER III

AN INTERVIEW WITH "MAD ANTHONY"

The satisfaction and pleasure Kingdom felt in finding that Fishing Bird, though a prisoner, was still unharmed, was mixed with much distress by the knowledge that nothing had been seen of John Jerome at Wayne's camp. True, it might be that John had gone directly to Fort Pitt; but even in doing so he would pass in the immediate vicinity of the military encampment and it would be strange if he did not stop.

Not the least light could any of the scouts or others with whom Ree talked throw upon the mystery of the missing boy. They agreed with his friend that he should have arrived at the Ohio several days ago, at least. Their views of the whole matter were most discouraging. Kingdom did not realize, they insisted, that the woods were full of hostile Indian bands; that all up and down the Ohio and for many miles in all directions, there was burning, pillaging

and murder almost every day, and no man was safe when alone.

Neither did Kingdom receive the least encouragement when he suggested that a rescue party be formed to search for his missing chum. Gen. Wayne would not think of it, the men said. It was no unusual thing for a man to be taken prisoner, no unusual thing for a lone hunter to be scalped. If the army were to undertake the rescue of every captive, or the punishment of every party of Indian marauders, there would be time for nothing else.

“Still, I must see Gen. Wayne himself,” Kingdom insisted. “Even if I can do nothing else for John Jerome, perhaps I can obtain freedom for Fishing Bird, and he and I can do something.”

Still the party of petty officers, scouts, and soldiers with whom Kingdom talked shook their heads, and it was only after considerable urging that one of the men said he would try to arrange matters for Ree to see the commander.

Kingdom had reached the encampment of

Wayne's "Legion" at about mid-day. It was late in the afternoon when his new-found friend, a sergeant named Quayle, consented to see if Ree could not have a talk with Gen. Wayne himself. The delay seemed past all understanding to Kingdom, little acquainted with army customs and discipline. And when the sergeant returned, bringing a superior officer with him, who, after talking with the anxious lad, told him that the general would see him in the morning, Kingdom's patience was sorely tried indeed. He did, however, obtain an assurance from the officer that Fishing Bird would be well treated and injured no further until he could present his petition for the Indian's release, and with this he endeavored to be content.

Unwilling to tell his whole story to anyone but "Mad Anthony" himself, Kingdom was unable to give the men with whom he mingled a great deal of information. They plied him with countless questions concerning the movements and general attitude of the Indians of the interior, and his experiences with them, but the

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heart-sick boy felt little disposed to talk and gave them no more than civil answers. In vain he tried to get permission to visit Fishing Bird in the guard-house. Serg. Quayle told him it would be of no use, but not until one higher in authority had kindly but very definitely refused did Ree give up.

Every hope Kingdom ventured to entertain now centered in Gen. Wayne, and time and again he went over in his mind all that he meant to say to the commander when the time came.

He saw to it that Phoebe was given a place among the horses in the camp and properly fed and cared for, then accepted an invitation extended by his friend, the sergeant, to have supper and spend the night with him.

Had his thoughts been less occupied with the strange disappearance of John, and with his anxiety concerning the outcome of his interview with Gen. Wayne, Ree would have spent a jolly evening among the care-free spirits,—woodsmen, adventurers, regular soldiers and raw recruits who made up the bulk of the “Legion.”

There was romance in the life of nearly every man about him. There were stories untold, but to some extent readable, in the faces and figures and ways of all the scouts, the hardened Indian fighters, and the seasoned soldiers. There was much of interest, too, among the great variety of fellows who were plainly not long from the east. Some were outcasts and downright criminals undoubtedly; some were sons of highly respected fathers, banished from home, perhaps, or here only in search of adventure and excitement. Their stories, their songs, their speech and their dress all told of the strangely different walks of life from which they had come; and gathered together here on the border of the great wilderness, while the campfires brightly burned, they made a truly romantic picture.

It was a picture which would live in history, too, as time in due course told; for in the end it proved that no more efficient force ever invaded hostile Indian territory than Wayne led to final victory over the savages who had vowed

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to make the Ohio river the boundary between themselves and civilization for all time.

The men with whom Ree came in contact were, in their rough way, very kind to the young man from the depths of the woods. They urged him to join them and go down the Ohio and thence march into the woods with them, and they assured him that he would never find a better chief than "Old Mad Anthony." To all these proposals Kingdom answered that he could think of nothing of the kind until John Jerome was found, living or dead, for which sentiment Sergeant Quayle heartily commended him.

For the most part the men of Wayne's command slept in the open air, but Sergeant Quayle and his intimate associates had erected a shelter of bark laid up against a pole placed across two forked sticks. Although one side of this crude structure was entirely open to the weather, the campfire made the fact scarcely unpleasant, and Kingdom found the soldiers' quarters quite comfortable. The lad was astir by the time

the first early risers of the army were moving about, however, and impatiently waited the coming of the aide who was to take him to Gen. Wayne's quarters.

At last came the lieutenant whom Ree had seen the day before. With scarcely a word he signaled with a nod to the lad to accompany him, and silently conducted the young frontiersman to a substantial log house. With a word to a sentry near, the officer opened the door and motioned to Kingdom to enter.

"Mad Anthony" sat at breakfast alone. He looked up with sharp but not unkind scrutiny of his visitor as, cap in hand, the boy softly closed the door and stood awaiting his notice.

"Sit down there and tell me your story," said the commander rather brusquely, indicating a three-legged stool near his table. Although he spoke in a quick, decisive way his voice was the kind which inspires confidence and the young visitor, though somewhat nervous, at no time was disconcerted by the business-like manner of the great soldier.

“Gladly, sir,” said Kingdom, seating himself, but for a moment hesitating just where to begin.

“Well, well, proceed then!” the general urged with a smile, and without further loss of time the boy told briefly who he was and what had brought him to the soldiers’ camp. He mentioned John Jerome’s connection with his story and John’s disappearance, alluding only briefly, for the time, to the murder at the salt springs, and to the charge of witchcraft that had been the beginning of the trouble. Of the lead mine he did not speak.

“I see no reason why we cannot give this Indian you are interested in his liberty,” said the general, when Ree had concluded. “But I am much afraid we can do nothing for your friend. Very likely he will turn up safe and sound before long. I am bound to say, though, that my advice to you would be that you do not go back to your cabin until these troublous times are over. How would you like to come with my

men—be one of my scouts and interpreters? Come, now?”

Poor Ree, sadly disheartened, could only reply that if circumstances were different he would very much like to do so; but as it was, well, he simply couldn't do anything until John Jerome was found. Then he told more fully of the trouble with Lone-Elk and how it had happened to result in the discovery of the two murdered men at the big “lick.”

Made more confident by Gen. Wayne's interest, he told of the strange camp in the gully and his reason for believing that the salt springs murderer or murderers were there.

“You may be right,” said the commander, “and you may be wrong. That two men,—apparently men not fully accustomed to the woods,—should have been killed and their bodies concealed in the brush, is, in these times, not surprising. And the fact being that these men are to us unknown, while it does not make the murder less distressing or less a crime, does present a reason for our not being duty bound

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to unravel the mystery and attempt to punish the perpetrators of the deed. In short, if we begin to follow up singly each red-handed outrage committed along the border, we shall not have men for anything else. We can only bide our time and strike the savages collectively—strike a blow that will bring both them and their British supporters to their senses—a blow with something of suddenness about it.”

Kingdom's hopes had dwindled to nothing. He wanted help, help to find John Jerome, help to carry out his plan to capture the salt springs criminals, and while he was about it, help to show Lone-Elk that he had powerful friends at his back who might make very costly to the Seneca any injury which was done the two young settlers on the land for which the Delawares had received a fair price.

Of course Gen. Wayne saw the whole trend of Kingdom's thoughts. There is a power possessed, as a rule, by great generals in every walk of life, by which they see at a glance the workings of the minds of the less mature or

less able men about them. Kingdom, however, was bright enough to understand all this perfectly, even while "Mad Anthony" talked with him. He felt that an injustice was done him. He knew that his motives were not by any means as selfish as they seemed. But how could he make himself better understood? He hesitated to try, and in his extremity, he played his last card—the lead mine.

Who can blame Return Kingdom if, when he told Gen. Wayne of the Seneca's secret, he went just a little beyond actual facts in his representation of the certainty of the mine's existence? That he had never seen the mine, he was forced, as the commander questioned him, to admit. Yes, it was true, he acknowledged, that he had never heard of the lead mine before Lone-Elk came among the Delawares. Neither had he seen any lead from the mine, nor could he tell positively of any Indian who had seen any. The story Fishing Bird had told was the whole basis of his assertion that there was a lead mine somewhere along the Cuyahoga, and

presumably it was not far from the mysterious camp in the ravine.

“Now have I all the information you can give me on this subject?” asked Gen. Wayne, with something of a twinkle in his eye.

“Yes, sir,” Kingdom answered, the twinkle somehow making him feel more comfortable than he did before.

“All right, then,” and the general stepped to the door. “Have that Indian, Fishing Bird, brought to headquarters,” he said to the man outside.

“Mad Anthony” paced thoughtfully up and down the earthen floor of the single room of the cabin while he waited. Wondering, and more hopeful now, Kingdom tried to determine what the commander meant to do by glancing often at his knitted brow.

In five minutes the Delaware, with a sullen air of pride, stepped into the cabin. In an instant, however, his manner changed. A look of pleasure came to his eyes and he held out his hand to Kingdom.

The greeting between the young woodsman and the Indian was pleasant to see. As soon as they had silently shaken hands, however, Gen. Wayne said:

“Now, Fishing Bird, what can you tell me of a lead mine near your Cuyahoga river?”

“The lead mine is the secret of Lone-Elk—Lone-Elk, the Seneca,” the Delaware made answer.

“Well, if I give you your liberty, will you go with this young man, your friend here, and some men I shall send with you, and see if you can find this mine? And will you help my young friend, whom you seem to know rather better than I do, find the boy who is accused of witchcraft?”

“Anything White Fox asks will Fishing Bird do,” the Indian replied, with quiet dignity.

CHAPTER IV

DELIVERED TO THE DELAWARES

The effort it cost John Jerome to conceal his astonishment and his chagrin as he encountered the savages hurrying toward the scene of the explosion, from which he was hastening away, would be hard to describe. But he controlled himself sufficiently to say:

“Hello, here, brothers! Don’t go up there or you may get blown sky high! My powder pouch fell into the fire, and it tore things up to beat the Dutch.”

With this greeting and hastily given explanation of his being found running away, the boy was starting on, thinking to be gone before the Indians had recovered from their own surprise; but in this he was disappointed. One fellow seized his hand, as if merely to shake it in friendly salutation, but continued to hold it and would not let him take it away. Quickly the

other savages gathered near and, though but a few seconds had passed, John saw that he was a prisoner and that his escape was intentionally cut completely off.

The situation seemed to give the Indians vastly more pleasure than it gave Jerome. Their amusement and delight made itself manifest in curious ways. One, with a great show of interest, took the boy's rifle from him and pretended to examine it as though it were some very rare specimen. Another did likewise with his pistols, while a third bore off his powder horn. Still others playfully rapped their victim's shins and head with their gun barrels, driving him at last to such desperation that when one particularly playful fellow pricked him suddenly from behind with a knife-point, he wheeled and with clenched fist sent the redskin sprawling among the leaves.

The savage retaliated with the butt of his rifle, but now the party started on, two of them leading John between them, and for the time the annoyances ceased. The Indians went at

once to the spot where the explosion had occurred, plainly marked in the gathering gloom by the remnants of the campfire. They inspected the locality with considerable interest. There was little to see, however, and in a short time they were under way again. Their course, John was sorry to see, was in the direction of the Delaware village on the lake.

Not until darkness made it quite impossible to go further did the savages pause. They chose as a camping place a slight depression in the ground, among some maples. The wind had gathered a deep drift of autumn leaves here, and as the captive lay down between two of the captors, he found his bed not otherwise uncomfortable. A long piece of untanned buckskin had been tied about his waist, however, and as its loose ends were tied to the waists of the Indians beside him, he realized that escape would be all but impossible.

John had had abundant opportunity to study the Indians while on the march, but the fading light had made it impossible to see them dis-

tinctly. There were seven in the party, all young, active fellows, and all strangers. They were Shawnees, John decided. Where they had been, and whither they were going he could not guess. He did know that it would be pleasanter lying between the two redskins who guarded him, if they would but give him more room, and he knew that the paint bedecking the band was no sign of good. Not wholly hopeless, however, he fell asleep at last, wondering what Ree was doing.

With daylight's coming the Indians kindled a fire and broiled some venison. They allowed their prisoner to eat all he wished, nor for the present was he tortured further with such antics as had been indulged in the night before. No haste was made to break camp and be on the move again by the band, but to the contrary, they were very deliberate in all they did. During the morning they held a council and, though they spoke in guarded tones, John knew that he was the subject of their talk.

The captive was glad to believe that none of

the Indians knew him. They would be for taking him directly to the Delaware town, to place him at the mercy of Lone-Elk, if they were aware of the charge against him, he was certain. If the savages asked him anything, he would in self-defense be bound to deceive them. Thinking of this made John think of deceiving the band still further. He would cause the savages to believe that he was from Detroit, a British spy sent to ascertain the extent of Wayne's forces, and, of course, friendly to the Indians.

The boy's opportunity to put his plan into practice came rather sooner than he expected. Within a few minutes one of the redskins who had their heads together in conference, came to him and asked in very fair English who he was and what he was doing in the woods so far from the settlements.

"It's about time you were finding out, I think," John answered, with a show of injured innocence. "At Detroit we are taught to believe that the English and the Indians are

brothers. We both hate the Americans, who are robbing all the tribes of the Northwest just as they robbed the Eastern tribes long ago, yet when my chief sends me to find out what moves the Americans are making to march into the forests of the Indians, lo! a party of my red brothers seize me and treat me as a prisoner!"

The savage to whom John addressed his words of well-feigned righteous wrath looked puzzled, then a grin spread itself slowly over his lips. He summoned the other Indians and told them, in substance, what the captive said. Then in a tongue John did not understand he added a few words which made them all smile.

Very much afraid that in some way he had gotten himself into a predicament, with his hastily concocted story, the lad felt at heart that he might have fared as well if he had told the truth; but having made a start upon a different road he was unwilling to turn back.

Even when one of the redskins began to question him as to when he had left Detroit, and with whom and by what route he had traveled, he

maintained his air of offended friendship, and answered as best he could. Asked the name of the person in command at Detroit at the time he left, he promptly answered, "Col. John Jenkins, and you ought to know it, if you know anything about Detroit at all."

John used the first name which came to him in replying to this question, and he answered many others just as rashly. From appearing puzzled the savages now seemed mightily amused. The prisoner noted the fact with chagrin, but stuck resolutely to his original story. The climax came, however, when he was asked if there had been much snow at Detroit when he left.

"Why, no; not much to speak of," he promptly answered.

The Indians looked at one another and grinned. Then one of them turned to him.

"Paleface heap big liar," he said.

"Why? Why am I? Because I said that there wasn't much snow? Well there wasn't! Of course there was lots of snow, but it wasn't any seven or eight feet deep!"

“One heap big fool liar,” the redskin reiterated.

The Indians seemed to have satisfied themselves completely as to the truthfulness of the prisoner. They gave his words no further attention, and how bitterly crestfallen, and in his heart ashamed and disgraced, he felt, no one knew so well as he, as they turned away to resume their conference.

John realized that he had probably made bad matters worse. Seeing how anxious he was to deceive them, the redskins would be more than ordinarily distrustful of him and perhaps conclude that he was one who, for some reason, was particularly hostile to them. They asked him no more questions now, but appeared to guard him even more closely than before.

John thought so, at least, for his mind was turning with increased attentiveness to the possibility of escape. Not the slightest prospect that a favorable opportunity would come to him did he see, however, and when the Indians resumed their journey a little later, he was put

between the two most villainous looking fellows in the band.

The course the savages took, in starting off this time, was slightly different from that pursued the night before. As nearly as John could reckon it would, if continued, land them, at the end of two or three days, at the "Crossing Place of the Muskingum," the point at which the Great Trail from Pittsburg to Detroit crossed the Muskingum river. Where this particular party of savages did eventually find themselves, though, John Jerome never knew, nor did he ever learn definitely that they had come from Detroit, as he suspected.

The reason for this presented itself the second day after the cross-questioning of the prisoner and the wretched failure of his effort to deceive. The Indians encamped at noon, after a leisurely journey through a fine forest country, beside a little spring bubbling from under the very trunk of a mammoth oak. They lingered here several hours and while they waited a party of five

bucks from Captain Pipe's town chanced suddenly upon them.

John recognized the fellows immediately. He knew, too, that they recognized him, though they did not at once pay any attention to him. It was not until after quite extensive greetings between them and the seven warriors in the Shawnee party, in fact, that they bestowed even a look upon the prisoner. Then they turned toward him with grins of malicious pleasure.

Having learned that their prisoner was none other than the "witch," of whom they had heard as having been the cause of the death of that well known warrior, Big Buffalo, the Shawnees plainly regarded him now as a dangerous individual. A little later he was the subject of a long conversation between the young Delawares and his captors and the wretched boy quickly discovered that his worst fears were realized. For the five from Pipe's town were anxious to have him taken to their village, and the Shawnees appeared not to object.

At some length the Delawares told of the cer-

tain evidence Lone-Elk had discovered—the hatchet found in the corn—the very hatchet with which Big Buffalo was killed, and of the long and fruitless search that had been made for the “witch.” They urged the Shawnees to come and see the Paleface burned, and the killing of one of the greatest warriors of the Delawares avenged.

In turn the band into whose merciless hands poor John had fallen told of the exciting times along the border, of burning and killing both by night and by day. They told, too, of much powder and much lead which the Indians could obtain at Detroit, and two of them exhibited brand new rifles. While they were anxious to see the “witch” destroyed, they said, they did not wish to go to Pipe’s town as they were on their way to a fruitful source of plunder.

As John heard and understood a considerable part of the conversation, a determination to escape or die in the attempt rapidly grew within him. And when he heard an agreement reached that he should be turned over to the

Delawares, while the Shawnees continued on their way, he set his mind intently upon the problem of getting away, or making an effort at least, let the cost be what it might.

The Shawnees turned John over to the Delawares, after binding him securely, with many a kick and cuff. They particularly denounced him as a "forked-tongued witch," and worked themselves into such passions of hatred that the prisoner was in imminent danger of being killed then and there.

With his hands tied behind him, and led and dragged by a long rope of rawhide about his neck, the captive was taken in charge by the Delawares, and the two Indian bands set off in different directions. The mission of the Shawnees, as has been stated, John never learned; but he well knew the destination of the five young Delawares, and a lump of pain and bitterness grew big in his throat as he thought of the cowardice and wretched injustice of it all.

CHAPTER V

THE BURNING OF THE CABIN

Indian troubles along the border were perhaps never worse in the history of the Northwest territory than in this year (1792) when Return Kingdom and John Jerome daily lived surrounded by dangers, the true, awful extent of which they little realized.

The scalping knife was never sharper, seldom bloodier. The torch was put to cabin after cabin. At mid-day and at midnight the flames which consumed the scattered evidences of civilization west of the Ohio river leaped skyward. The fierce war-whoop rang defiantly from Detroit south to the settlements in Kentucky and no white man was safe. Harmless traders, and peaceable hunters as well as settlers were murdered and their scalps hung high on the lodges of the Delawares, Shawnees, Chippewas, Wyan-

dots, and all the tribes between the Wabash river and the Allegheny mountains.

And all the while the British at Detroit were urging the Indians on, and all the while the authorities of the American government were urging moderation on Wayne's part and trying hopelessly to bring about peace.

Some peace commissioners who were sent to treat with the Indians were at first received kindly, but without warning, a few days later, slain.

News traveled far less rapidly in those days than now. A family might at midnight hear the redskins' dreadful yells and die fleeing from the fierce savages, even while flames devoured their home. But neighbors only a few miles distant would continue to dwell in supposed security, knowing nothing of the outrage, and so only the more readily fall victims of the same ferocious Indian band a little later.

Indeed, it is not remarkable that Return and John had felt little fear among the Indians, while living so far from the frontier that news

of the terrible tragedies along the border did not reach them. Their entire plan for the future had been from the first to make the redskins their friends. They had, with some rather serious exceptions, in which they were not at fault, succeeded admirably until Lone-Elk incited Captain Pipe's people to hostility. But now, even had both the boys been at their cabin, and seemingly at peace with every tribe, as they had once been, they could not have failed to discover evidence of the warlike activity about them. They would not only have seen but, very likely, have felt, the increasing hostility of every redman the vast wilds contained.

No longer did the head men, such as Chief Hopocon or Captain Pipe, seek to restrain the bloodthirsty young warriors. They were allowed full sway. Treaties still fresh in their minds, such as that fixing the Cuyahoga and the portage trail as a definite boundary between the white men and their red brethren, were forgotten or no more regarded than the leaves which drifted before the autumn winds.

The arrival of John Jerome, bound hand and foot, at the Delaware town on the lake was the signal for an outburst of ferocious savage hilarity, by no means comforting to that young gentleman.

Twice had John attempted to escape from the five young bucks—Indians scarcely older than himself—and each time had he failed. First he had tried to buy his liberty and exerted every effort to prevail upon the youthful braves to give him his freedom, to give him at least a chance for it, a start of three yards, then the use of his hands and feet and no start at all. His endeavors and his pleading were all fruitless.

Determined to escape, then, John made a bold dash while the little party was on the march; but the strap which held him was strong, and he was stopped in a moment. His second attempt to get away was scarcely more successful. The Indians had paused to rest and refresh themselves beside a little lake which lay but a few miles from the Delaware town. One of the

fellows, the one who held the long strip of raw-hide tied to the captive's neck, lay down on the beach to drink. For a moment he released his hold on the strap and instantly John took advantage of it. But he ran only a few rods before two of the braves caught him, and the punishment they and the others administered was severe. Then it was that the prisoner's feet as well as his hands were bound and so was he dragged into the village at last.

In vain did John look about for Fishing Bird, for Gentle Maiden or some of the other Delawares who had been especially friendly in the past. Fishing Bird, of course, was not there, and Gentle Maiden remained out of sight. That she felt sympathy for the prisoner, however, is certain. She saw to it that proper food was carried to him, and exerted all her influence to prevent harm from coming to him. Especially did she urge that the sentence of death for witchcraft should not be executed until the return of Captain Pipe, who was gone to the Delaware town on the Muskingum.

As Lone-Elk, also, was away, and as he had a strong personal interest in the infliction of the punishment the Little Paleface must suffer, no more was done to end the captive's life at once. But one by one the Delawares informed John of what he must expect. Some told him his fate would be death at the stake. Others said that Lone-Elk would end everything with one mighty blow with the same hatchet that had caused Big Buffalo's death.

Even these gloomy assurances, however, did not alarm poor John so much as the wild hostility he saw everywhere about him—nearly all the Indians in war paint, their war-whoops ringing out at every hour of the day and night, as they contemplated the extinction of both the settlers and later the whole Paleface army, gathering as they knew, to march against them. Much of the threatening demonstration was due to the keen zest of the younger savages. In the absence of their chief they were under no restraint and the ferocious delight with which they

scented from afar the expected fighting was but a part of their nature.

Day after day slipped by and Captain Pipe did not return. Confined in a rude hut, without fire and without comforts of any kind, excepting sufficient food, such as it was, John Jerome suffered both in body and in spirit. But he was to suffer more later. Indeed, each day brought its additional burdens of grief and pain.

Constantly watched as he was, the sorrowful boy found not one reason to believe that a chance to escape might come to him, and now was anxiety for his own safety more than doubled by the conviction forced upon him that Return Kingdom was gone forever—murdered, tortured, shot from ambush. He knew not how his life had been taken, but the certain evidence that Ree was dead was presented to him in the course of a night of savage barbarity the like of which few white men ever had equal opportunities of seeing.

It was late in the afternoon of an ideal In-

dian summer day that Lone-Elk returned to the Delaware town. He brought bullets and this time powder also. Only a shrug of his bare shoulders marked his interest in the news when told that the "witch" was captured; that Little Paleface was even at the moment safely held captive beyond all possibility of escape.

He did not so much as go to see and gloat over the unhappy prisoner; but a murderous gleam came in his eyes and he told Neohaw and several others that the stake and the fire would be the "witch's" portion when Captain Pipe came. He would not execute the death sentence before the chief's return, for then they would have a celebration which would be a lesson to all the Palefaces for many days to come, just as the burning of the "White Chief," Crawford, had been.

Nevertheless Lone-Elk quickly laid his plans to torture and torment the young captive, and to instill in the minds of all the Delawares a hatred of every Paleface, and a belief in the certain ease with which their country might be

rid of them. He arranged a war dance. Every warrior, every buck and brave in the village answered his summons. Gentle Maiden guessed at once the meaning of it all, as in the early twilight the fighting men of her father's people began to gather. It was useless for her to remonstrate, and as the fierce, sharp cries that accompanied the horrid dance swelled in volume and in number, John himself was scarcely more apprehensive of the outcome than was she.

Round and round the campfire the savages danced. Their contortions of face and body, their violent shrieks and awful fervor were terrible to look upon. Fiercest of all was Lone-Elk. Louder than all the others was the war-whoop of the Seneca, and at midnight he had wrought to the highest pitch of bloodthirsty ardor every Delaware participating in the horrible revelry.

"Come!" called the outcast loudly at last, "Come! Will the Delawares close their eyes in sleep when so near them is a house of the Pale-faces? A house that will draw others to it till

the forests of the Indians are all cut down and they themselves driven away and killed? Come! Who will come with Lone-Elk?"

A fierce chorus of war cries greeted his words. Drunk with excitement, the Delawares paused not to consider. With terrible yells they surged after the Seneca and like a shrieking band of fiends hurried rapidly through the moonlit forest.

"Hold! Let the Delawares bring the Pale-face witch!" cried Lone-Elk. "Let the murderer of the brave Big Buffalo see the nest where birds of his kind are hatched go up in fire!"

No sooner said than done. A dozen of the fiercest of the band, mad with the passions that had been aroused within them, rushed back and in five minutes came dragging John Jerome after them. By a rope around his body, and by another about his neck, they both drove and pulled him. Their awful yells could have been heard for miles.

Following the portage trail to its end and

crossing the river, the savages broke into the clearing about the cabin a little further on at a run. Up the hill they went and with whooping and yelling of impassioned fury they attacked the cabin, so humble, so quiet and so home-like and unoffending in its appearance that its destruction seemed the foulest crime in all of border warfare's awful annals.

With tomahawks the door was beaten in, though but to have pulled the string would have raised the latch, and the mad race of pillage and plunder began. Everything breakable was thrown down and destroyed. Table, stools, bedding and all the little conveniences that Ree and John had been at such pains to plan and construct were thrown indiscriminately about.

"Let the witch burn his own foul nest," the Seneca yelled in his native tongue, but the captive, trembling with anger and sickened by the awful scenes he was compelled to witness, understood and drew back. In vain two Delawares who held him sought to force him to take and apply the torch that a third held out. They

burned his bare hands, set fire to his clothing and his hair, but to no purpose. He could not fight, but he could resist if it killed him, and resist John did, let the consequences be what they might.

“Ugh! Ugh!” loudly ejaculated one of the older Indians impatiently, at last, and grabbing the burning hickory bark from the one who tried vainly to make the prisoner take it, he carried it quickly into the lean-to stable.

In an instant the dry hay and fodder were in flames. In another minute the fire had reached the cabin. Soon the terrible glare filled all the clearing and while the home the boy pioneers had held so dear, and all the things within it which long association made them fondly cherish, turned black, then red and yielded at last to the crackling, roaring destroyer, the Indians danced about in savage celebration, brandishing tomahawks and scalping knives, yelling and shrieking like the untamed demons that they were.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN IN THE RAVINE

Very little time indeed was required for Return Kingdom to make clear to Fishing Bird the work he wished to do. The Delaware was decidedly surprised to learn that a white man, or men, of whom he knew nothing, were encamped near the Cuyahoga and he also exhibited the liveliest interest in the information Ree gave him concerning the two men murdered at the salt springs.

The probability that John Jerome had been captured, however, interested the Indian more than all else, though it distressed him, too. Repeatedly he shook his head with an air of utmost gravity and regret.

Gen. Wayne was a man who did things. Once his plans were formed, their execution went ahead without a moment's unnecessary delay,

and in a very short space of time he had caused men to be detailed to accompany Kingdom and his loyal friend.

The boy's request that Sergeant Quayle be sent with him was promptly granted and that good-natured son of Erin with three others, all experienced woodsmen, gladly undertook the duty assigned them. They agreed with Kingdom, too, that a large force of men would not be needed, and that by care a small party would be able to accomplish more than a greater number. They would be far less likely to attract attention or invite an attack from ambush.

Late in the afternoon the well-armed band set out. By common consent Kingdom was given general command, though he took counsel always with the others. Only one circumstance marred his perfect confidence in the expedition. This was the distrustful manner in which two of the woodsmen constantly regarded Fishing Bird. They were Indian haters and Indian fighters. They could "see no good in 'ary a single red mother's son of 'em," as one of them

expressed it, "and didn't care who knowed it."

The Sergeant, however, was more charitably inclined. Being of buoyant spirits, too, when somewhat relieved of the camp's restraints, he kept everyone in a good humor with his droll remarks.

Even over the badly decomposed bodies of the two unfortunate men, killed at the "big lick," his manner was the same.

"Sure, they'd ha' be'an far better presarved if put in the brine! An' so much o' it, handy like, 'tis a shame, it is!" said he.

But notwithstanding, Quayle, as well as all the others, was much affected by the awful sight the removal of the brush heap disclosed. Ree knew from John's description just where to look for the bodies of the murdered men, and he hoped to find something that his friend might have overlooked, which would reveal the men's identities. Sergeant Quayle and the woodsmen had also been anxious to see if they could not tell who the unfortunates were, and it was for these reasons that the springs were

visited, though they lay somewhat away from the direct trail.

Nothing did the little party find to shed any light on the mysterious murder. The older woodsmen declared that both the dead men must have come from some distant point. If either had belonged anywhere in the vicinity of the Ohio river, they would have seen them at some time, they were sure. Sergeant Quayle was of the opinion, from the dress and general appearance of the murdered pair, that they had come from some of the British posts in the Northwest, probably Detroit. Yet he expressed the belief that Indians had committed the murder, and only when Kingdom reminded him of the evidence afforded by the pair of gloves that had been found, did he say:

“Leastwise, we’ll agree to this, lad; savages done it. White men or red men, they was black-hearted savages that done such a dirty deed!”

The party spent a night in the vicinity of the salt springs. Though regretting the least delay, and anxious always to be pushing on, Kingdom

was greatly interested in the evidences of civilization having at one time had a foothold at the "lick," as John had been. He was fortunate in learning more about the matter than Jerome had learned, however, for one of the woodsmen—a great, broad-shouldered young fellow, whose name, oddly enough, was Small,—knew much about the springs.

In camp at night he told the others how, several years earlier, Gen. Samuel H. Parsons had come from Connecticut and attempted to establish a salt factory at the place. He undertook to purchase twenty-five thousand acres of land, embracing the springs and the territory about them, and expected to reap a great fortune. He was greatly disappointed in the quantity of salt the water contained, but might have carried out his plan, anyway, had it not been that, in returning from the springs to the east, he was drowned by the upsetting of his canoe at the Beaver falls. The purchase of the great tract he had intended buying, was, therefore, never completed.

“But as a rule, lad, ye’ll note as ye go through life,” said the Sergeant to Ree—he nearly always addressed his words to Kingdom—“as a rule, ye’ll note that parsons are more partial to poultry than to salt. Still, ye’ll do well to tie to the parsons, Lord bless ’em! It’s a preacher I’d ha’ be’an me ownsilf but fur—”

The Sergeant left his exclamation unfinished and with a sigh, which was also a chuckle, lay down and drew his blanket close about him.

Kingdom planned to lead his party directly to the cabin on the Cuyahoga. He was hoping he would find John Jerome in that neighborhood or in hiding at the old poplar, even while he told himself how little ground he had for such a thought.

Men coming to Wayne’s camp from Fort Pitt had brought word that John had not been there, and where to look for him, excepting near the cabin, or among the Delawares, Ree did not know. He was depending on Fishing Bird to obtain information for him, however, and repeatedly, on the journey west, the Indian would

go a long distance from the others of the party to find, if possible, some wandering redskins who might be able to give him news of the capture of the lad they sought.

Although at no time was the Delaware in any way successful, he never failed to rejoin Ree and his white friends at night. In every way, both then and later, he proved himself thoroughly trustworthy and loyal, despite the daily predictions of Jim Small that he would turn up missing when he was most wanted, and be found hostile when his friendship was most desired.

The march through the forest wilds was interrupted by no incident of importance. Ree had left his horse at Wayne's encampment, as he had no wish to ride while others walked, and, under the circumstances, the mare would be a hindrance. Rapid progress was made by the "expedition," as Sergeant Quayle always called the little band of six, however, and the increasing severity of the weather was almost the only hardship of the undertaking.

At the middle of an afternoon much pleasanter than the raw, cold days which had preceded it, the expedition reached a point only a few miles from the clearing and the river. A council of war was held and it was decided that Ree and Fishing Bird should go forward to look for John at the cabin, while Sergeant Quayle and the others turned off to the north to await their report at a certain rocky ledge of which both Kingdom and the woodsmen knew.

The chief reason for this action was the secrecy which must be observed to prevent knowledge of the presence of so large a party reaching the mysterious camp in the gully. The camp itself would be inspected under cover of darkness and a decision could then be reached concerning the best time and manner of surprising the murderers, and effecting their capture. If it were found that the camp seemed permanently occupied, and the occupants intending to stay indefinitely, they would be allowed to rest in supposed security while John Jerome was being located.

Ree had seen from the first that the men who accompanied him were more keenly interested in the lead mine than anything else. He would rather have made the finding of John Jerome the first object to be achieved, but he gave way to the wishes of the Sergeant in this instance, and now he and Fishing Bird hastened on to the cabin.

Cautiously Kingdom and the Delaware approached the clearing. The sun shone lazily, the air, though cool, was soft and still. Peace seemed everywhere. It was hard to believe the reverse was true. And then came the shock.

From the edge of the woods Ree saw the awful work Lone-Elk and his warriors had done. Not a muscle of his face moved. Though even Fishing Bird sorrowfully shook his head and put his arm before his eyes to shut out the most unhappy scene, the boy remained cool and collected. No sign of the tempest of grief and boiling anger that raged within him was visible on the surface. With surprise the Delaware observed his calm demeanor and heard him say:

“Whose work this is, Fishing Bird, we don’t know. Just what has been done, though, we can plainly see. I am afraid it means something worse. So what I want you to do, good Fishing Bird, is to hurry to the Delaware town. Hurry to the village and learn anything and all you can about what has happened to Little Pale-face. Whether the Delawares know much, or nothing, come to me at the rocks where I am to meet my friends, tomorrow morning. Come early, Fishing Bird, and bring good news if you can. Bring bad news if you must. But most of all don’t fail me.”

“Every word Fishing Bird understands,” the Indian answered, and in another minute was gone.

For a very short time Ree lingered at the clearing’s edge. Tears came to his eyes, now that he was alone, when he looked at the fire-stained chimney rising like a spectre above the ruin of ashes around it,—the only thing left of his home. Quickly, however, he wiped the evidence of his sorrow from his face. He glanced

around for old Neb, the cart horse, but saw nothing of the animal. "They've taken him too, no doubt," he thought, and his heart grew more bitter and his face more stern, as he turned away.

The ease with which Kingdom traversed the forest, up hill and down hill, and his familiarity with the country for miles around, enabled him to reach the meeting place at the rocky ledge almost as soon as Sergeant Quayle and his companions. Briefly he told them what he had seen. They asked questions which he could not answer, as he had not minutely inspected the clearing, but he did not tell them his reason for not having done so, though he knew it well. It was because he could not bear to undertake the heart-breaking task.

"Anyway," said Sergeant Quayle, "our business tonight is t' see this queer camp ye've tould us of, an' hear what the redskin tells in the mornin'."

So were plans made accordingly and after a cold supper all hands set out stealthily to in-

spect the haunt of the mysterious man in the gully. Ree led the way, nor was his task difficult. The light of a small campfire was seen reflected on the branches of the trees, even before the ravine was reached.

Stooping low, and taking every step with care, all five approached the edge of the bluff. For a few minutes nothing more than the small blaze could be seen. But the fire had lately been replenished with fresh wood and, with this evidence that some one was near, the watchers were content to wait.

Soon a man came into view. He carried several slices of meat and, sprinkling them freely with salt from a pouch at his belt, prepared to broil them. Little did he suspect how intently his every movement was scrutinized, for he mumbled to himself, and spread his great hands out to the warmth of the blaze, as if he had no thought but to enjoy the meal he was preparing. When the meat was cooked he ate greedily, then disappearing for a few seconds, returned with more. This he disposed of in the same way.

For perhaps half an hour he continued to sit near the fire, but rising in a regretful manner, at last, he covered the embers with ashes, then disappeared and returned no more.

Until far into the night Ree and his four companions remained watching, then cautiously withdrew. The moonlight filtered through the leafless branches of the trees and the air was very frosty. For warmth and rest Kingdom led the party to the hollow whitewood. Here a conference was held and the decision reached to return to the camp in the gully just before daybreak.

Whether the others slept Ree did not know. They all were wrapped in their blankets and very quiet. But he knew that he did not sleep, nor could he had he tried. The loss of John, the burned cabin, the whole sorrowful end of all the bright hopes of a few weeks before kept his thoughts too unhappily occupied, and he was glad of the darkness that it concealed his grief and pain.

Sometime before dawn Sergeant Quayle

stretched himself and sat up. Kingdom did likewise and the others were also soon astir. With the same care as before they moved upon the haunted ravine, and chose their places, each a little distance from the others, but all where they could hurry down the steep hillside at a moment's notice.

The sun was just rising as the tenant of the lonely camp came suddenly into the light, stretching himself and yawning.

The click of the Sergeant's rifle as he cocked it was the signal, and it sounded loud enough. Silently, swiftly and almost noiselessly the five men descended the bluff, and, almost before the murderer's yawn permitted his mouth to close, it was open again, but this time in extraordinary astonishment. He was surrounded by stern, strange faces.

CHAPTER VII

ONE MYSTERY CLEARED AWAY

It was daylight when with parting war-whoops the Indians left the scene of the terrible fire they had kindled, dragging John Jerome by the thongs which bound him. But they took with them flames which threatened even greater danger to the Paleface boy—the fires of excitement, hate and merciless cruelty which the night's barbarities had kindled in their brains. John realized this full well. Though the savages had been rough and brutal in their treatment of him before, now they were still more so. No indignity, no suffering was too great to be inflicted upon him.

Little wonder is it that on his own account poor John wished for but two things—the slightest opportunity to escape, or the end of it all quickly. Only the thoughts of Return, and how his friend would be searching for him

everywhere, as soon as news reached his ears, buoyed up the wretched lad's drooping spirits and gave him strength to endure the cruelties heaped on his defenseless head.

Tired out after their night's carousal, most of the savages lay down to rest upon their arrival at the village, and John was allowed also to sink into a troubled sleep, though watched constantly. It was about noon when he fully awoke, to find that something out of the ordinary was taking place. By degrees he discovered what it was, learned that Captain Pipe had returned and that explanations were being made concerning the burning of the cabin.

Lone-Elk took upon himself the whole responsibility for the offense. The Little Paleface was a witch, he declared, and his brother, the White Fox, was a spy upon the Indians, and on the pretext of befriending Fishing Bird, had gone to Wayne's camp to carry word of the movements of the Delawares.

The Seneca would have put the loyalty of Fishing Bird himself to the Delawares in ques-

tion had he dared to do so, but he gained his point without it; gained all he sought—praise for his own loyalty to the cause of the Indians as a whole; no censure for the pillage and destruction of the white boys' cabin, and last and greatest of all, the assurance that the captive, Little Paleface, would be put to death.

Let him be burned at the stake, Lone-Elk argued. Some of the younger Delawares had never seen a prisoner suffer by fire. It would warm their blood and teach them how to punish their enemies.

“By fire, then, let the witch be killed,” Captain Pipe had ordered, and the terrible sentence reached John Jerome in his guarded hut a little later.

Four warriors came. They roughly stripped him of all clothing excepting his fringed buckskin trousers, and painted his face and body black. Thus he was left for the time, as the hour of his torture was to be the following morning. But he was told to prepare for death and in-

formed bluntly that with the rising of another sun he would bid farewell to earth forever.

In vain did John ask to see Captain Pipe. The chief would not go near him. He asked for Gentle Maiden, knowing that she would intercede for him if she could. No word was taken to her. He asked for Neohaw. The old medicine-man came. He heard the lad's appeal, and shook his head.

"Neohaw can do nothing," he declared. "Lone-Elk is in favor with all the Delawares and with their great chief, Hopocon. No one can help the Little Paleface. Neohaw believes not that the Paleface brother killed Big Buffalo. Yet all the Delawares have harkened to the tale of the Seneca and the white boy must die. Let him then go bravely to the fire. Let him sing boldly to the last the death songs that his fathers taught him."

John thanked the aged Indian for his sympathy and said no more. He did feel better, somehow, to know that there was one friend left in the village, where so many times he had been received with greatest favor in days gone by,

and resolved that if die he must, it would be bravely.

Something very like tears, however, dimmed his eyes as he thought of his unhappy end. He held them back with an effort and, lest they come again, and be taken as evidence of fear or cowardice, he prayed for strength to meet the awful fate he must suffer like a man. He breathed a prayer for comfort for Ree Kingdom and for the dear ones in far-away Connecticut, when the news of his death should reach them.

It was night now. The Indians made the most of it. Their war cries, as once again they engaged in the terrible dance, led, as always, by the bloodthirsty Seneca, were frightful. But to John Jerome a peace which passeth understanding had come, and with thoughts of all the happy days his young life, so soon to close, had known, and in his heart a trusting faith that One who died for others would be with him to the end, he fell at last into soothing, restful slumber.

At dawn John awoke. The village was quiet. The two savages who stood guard over him seemed to be the only ones not still asleep, save for a trio of squaws rekindling the fires before their wigwams. The air was chill and raw, but crows were cawing lustily, and a bluejay screeched his harsh song near by. Soon the sun rose, pale but clear. It was a pleasant morning to be alive, a most gloomy one to die.

Patiently the prisoner of the Delawares awaited the executioners. They soon would come, he thought, and nerved himself to meet them without a tremor. His lip quivered the least bit and a lump came in his throat, but outwardly he was so calm that the Indians watching him marveled at his courage, and told one another in whispers that witches were more than human.

The morning went quickly by. Expecting each minute to see Lone-Elk and others coming for him, time seemed to John to go both slow and fast; slow, that no one came; fast, because each minute was so precious. Hope had not

wholly left him, either. It might be, even now, he thought, that Neohaw or Gentle Maiden, or maybe Long-Hair or Little Wolf, had successfully interceded in his behalf.

At last two Indians came to relieve those who guarded the prisoner. The Delawares were stirring about in numbers now. John asked the new guards for food and it was brought to him. Then Neohaw came. In a kindly way he told the boy that the time of the burning had been changed and the torture fire would not be lighted until night. Against Lone-Elk's wishes, Captain Pipe had decided on this, as he had no wish to participate in the terrible festivities. He planned to go away near evening and leave everything to the Seneca.

All day the more cruel of the Delawares exhibited their impatience. All day squaws were busy adding to the collection of wood about the burning-post, set firmly in the ground at the edge of the collection of huts and wigwams that comprised the town. Between the logs of his prison John could plainly see all that went on.

It was late in the afternoon. Night's shades were deepening. The sun had nearly sunk from view and a soft, golden light rested for a time on the bosom of the little lake.

With a glad cry an Indian came leaping into the village. Fishing Bird it was, and his joy at being safe at home once more was great. In a moment, however, his happiness vanished. In a trice he discovered the burning-post and the fagots piled near it. He guessed its meaning instantly, and his fears were immediately confirmed as he made inquiry.

Captain Pipe was just leaving the village but stayed a few seconds to give Fishing Bird greeting. He listened gravely to the younger Indian's plea that the Little Paleface be spared. He shook his head. Then Fishing Bird told of the rapid ride Return Kingdom had made through the woods to save a Delaware's life, and called Long-Hair and Little Wolf to tell of the part they had had in that undertaking.

“A council shall be held. The Delawares

will give the one accused of witchcraft a fair trial," said the chief at last. "If then it is found that, as a witch, the Little Paleface killed a warrior of the Delawares, he must suffer the penalty. Fishing Bird can ask nothing more."

Very soberly the friendly Indian approached the place of the white boy's confinement and told him that for the present his life was spared.

John's happiness in seeing the loyal fellow once again, and in having another friend at hand, was inexpressible. Soon he had learned all that the Delaware could tell him concerning Ree and what the latter had been doing.

"One thing, then, Fishing Bird, you must do for me," he said. "Let Ree Kingdom know that I am to have a trial. Get Captain Pipe to let you bring him and his friends here."

"Fishing Bird will bring them. Tell nobody," the Indian whispered, and withdrew.

Before the coming of another day the Indian friend of the boy pioneers had left the village. He had found that the time of the council the Delawares would hold to place Little Paleface

on trial would be the following afternoon. The torture fire would be lighted in the evening, if the boy was found guilty, as was very certain to be the case. It was with great news to tell and many conflicting thoughts in mind, therefore, that he sped through the woods to meet Return Kingdom at the spot agreed upon.

Thus while Fishing Bird hastened to the meeting place from one point, Ree was making his way toward the same ledge of rocks from another. Without the least difficulty the lone occupant of the mysterious camp had been captured and taken away. While Jim Small and another of the woodsmen watched the camp from the bushes to surprise and make prisoners of any confederates of the fellow, should such put in an appearance, Sergeant Quayle and the fourth of his squad held the murderer in close quarters at the hollow whitewood. Search of the camp would not be made, it was agreed, until Kingdom's return with Fishing Bird.

Ree and the Delaware reached the place of meeting at about the same time. As the redskin

came up, Kingdom searched his face anxiously for some clue to the tidings he brought. It was vain to do so. Indian-like, he could conceal his thoughts completely and he wanted the pleasure of telling what he had accomplished before its substance was surmised.

He soon did tell, however, all that had happened and very soberly, indeed, did Ree receive the news. How glad he was that Fishing Bird had reached the village so opportunely need not be told. The great question was what could be done to rescue John Jerome?

“We’ll ask the Sergeant what he thinks about it,” said Kingdom as the Delaware told more fully of the desperate situation their friend was in. “Come, we must hurry. There’ll be not a minute to lose.”

Another surprise awaited Ree when the old poplar was reached.

“Whist! The dirty British pig has tould ivereverything!” whispered Sergeant Quayle, meeting Kingdom and the Indian at the edge of the thicket. “A foine thing it is, too, so it is!”

And with these words the disgusted Irishman led the way forward.

Within the hollow tree there lay a great bulk of a fellow groveling on the leaf-strewn earth, bewailing his fate, pleading for mercy, and altogether making of himself a most miserable, loathsome spectacle.

“Oh, if I’d knowed it would come to this!” he blubbered. “Don’t let them punish me! Oh, kind gentlemen, save me! Let me go away and sin no more! Won’t some one speak a kind word to me?”

The abject fear of the craven, now that his crime had found him out, would have been pitiable had his whole manner not been so utterly contemptible.

Giving little heed to the guilty wretch, however, Ree at once apprised the Sergeant of the news Fishing Bird had brought and the latter was immediately sent to summon Jim Small and his companions for a conference.

While he was gone Sergeant Quayle told, with many expletives and many invectives

against the British, the confession the murderer had made. The fellow's name, it developed, was Lobb. He had been connected in an unofficial way with the British garrison at Detroit and had served a number of times as a go-between for the English officers in certain of their more or less secret dealings with the Indians. In consequence of these services he was chosen to accompany two men sent to encourage hostilities among the savages to the south of Lake Erie and as near the border of the American settlements as they should deem it prudent to go.

The party traveled by canoe, Lobb had said, and coasting along the southern shore of Lake Erie, reached and ascended the Cuyahoga river. In the course of this trip they fell in with Lone-Elk, roaming the woods alone, as his frequent custom was. The Seneca was not unknown to the men, for he had visited Detroit and offered his services to the British when forced to flee from his home among his own people.

For various reasons, but principally because

they feared some news of their presence would reach Fort Pitt or Gen. Wayne, the men concluded to do all their business with the Indians of the locality through Lone-Elk. He would distribute their bounty, the powder and the bullets they brought, also gold for those who cared for it.

Not long had the men been in the vicinity when they decided to visit the salt springs of which they had heard a great deal. To conceal their identity they concluded, also, that they would make some salt while there, pretending that such was the sole purpose of their presence.

It was at the springs that Lobb's cupidity got the better of his natural cowardice and what little decency he possessed. With a view to obtaining the gold in the party's possession, and thinking then to escape to the east in disguise, he concealed himself and shot both his comrades just as they were preparing to leave the springs. To convey the impression that Indians had done the awful deed he scalped

both men. Then, filled with fear lest the bodies be found before he could get away, he had dragged them into the woods and covered them with brush.

“Well, why did he hang around here? What did he say about the lead mine?” asked Ree, as the Sergeant finished.

“Sure, it’s all the farther he wint with his black yarn, fer with ‘ye dirty cur, ye!’ I give him a push an’ a shove an’ he landed where he’s still layin’, hard an’ fast ferninst the ground there.”

Lobb was questioned further by Kingdom immediately. The boy believed he saw in the loathsome creature’s story reason to believe that the Delawares had been grievously deceived by the Seneca.

Whining and groaning, the self-confessed murderer continued his story. He had been afraid to go on east from the springs, he said, and made all haste back to the Cuyahoga, where he and his companions had established head-

quarters in a small cave, originally pointed out to them by Lone-Elk.

From here he dared move in no direction. He was afraid to return to Detroit—afraid to go east, west, north or south. Knowing of the presence of the two boy pioneers, a few miles away, his fears were greatly increased lest they discover him and guess his guilty secret. Day after day, then, he had lived in the hole in the hillside, coming out only at night to prepare food, or when forced to go in search of fresh meat.

Imploring mercy and begging for freedom, the fellow concluded his statement.

“You’ve told everything, have you?” Kingdom asked with as little harshness as his feelings would permit.

“Aye, master, aye — everything,” Lobb whined.

“So it was you, then, who supplied Lone-Elk with lead and bullets, and his story of a lead mine was a story and nothing more?” the boy demanded.

“I guess so. I don’t know anything about a lead mine, master. Truly I don’t know anything about it. I do remember though, come to think, that Lone-Elk said once that I was his lead mine and I must look out that the Pale-faces didn’t find it out.”

“You hear that, Sergeant?” exclaimed Ree, with some excitement. “Now let us see whether that sneaking Seneca will continue to rule the Delawares!”

CHAPTER VIII

WHO KILLED BIG BUFFALO?

Even before Kingdom finished questioning the murderer, Fishing Bird had come up bringing the two woodsmen from the gully. All three were quickly informed of Lobb's confession and of the discovery of John Jerome and the great danger surrounding him. The entire party looked to Ree for a suggestion.

"We've got to act and act quickly," the lad said in a low tone. "If Fishing Bird will be our escort, I propose that we go to the Delaware town as fast as we can go. If Captain Pipe can be made to understand that Lone-Elk has deceived the Delawares in one way, we can, with Fishing Bird's help, and Lobb's confession, bring him to his senses about this witchcraft business."

"Lone-Elk's a bad 'un. He killed a Seneca

and had to leave home," put in Lobb, who had listened attentively.

"Huh!" snorted Sergeant Quayle. "Cain killed Abel an' had to leave home; but he didn't go bush-whackin' two men from behind!"

"And what about Mr. Lobb, anyhow? We can't leave him, once we've had the pleasure of his company?" put in Jim Small, with sarcasm.

"Take him along," said another of the woodsmen.

"Yes, that is what I had in mind," Ree answered. "He can tell Pipe what he has told us. But we must be moving, men! It's a long tramp and time's flying!"

Without loss of time the party got under way. No one questioned the wisdom of Kingdom's plan, although, if the truth were known, two of the men at least, looked for a lively scrimmage as a result of the undertaking. But they did not falter. Indeed, it is a question if they did not rather relish the prospect of a brush with the Delawares.

Lobb was completely disarmed but he was not bound.

"I give ye my word, master, I'll not try gettin' away," he said.

"Whist! Give me yer chances in the hereafter; one's as good as 'tother," retorted the Sergeant contemptuously, and then informed the murderer further that the slightest attempt on his part would result in his being shot first and asked as to the meaning of it afterward.

The fellow made some very humble answer but he grew decidedly thoughtful and rather sullen as the marchers hurried rapidly through the woods. There was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes, too, when the party passed the clearing and saw only a heap of ashes and the chimney where the boys' cabin had stood. He was thinking. He was planning to betray his captors and with Lone-Elk's help to turn the tables upon them. How well he succeeded will soon be told, for now comes a part of this history which all participants therein remembered throughout their lives, and which left its

impress upon the people of Captain Pipe's town long after the village itself had ceased to be.

The day was bright and clear. Though not warm, neither was it very cold, and the south wind which sighed in the leafless branches of the trees and gently rippled the waters of the little lake seemed soft as velvet. The Delawares were in fine spirits. With savage rapture they looked forward to the terrible celebration the night would bring.

From the lower towns on the Muskingum Captain Pipe had brought encouraging news of Indian successes along the border and almost without exception his warriors were enthusiastic for the final conflict with Wayne's "Legion," which, they believed, would not be long in coming. They felt perfect confidence as to the outcome. They had seen his raw recruits. They did not know then that "Mad Anthony" had no intention of marching upon them until his troops were trained. This and much else they learned in time and to their sorrow.

But there was another reason for a feeling of

happiness in the Delaware town, and particularly was Lone-Elk, the Seneca, in a good humor. This very day there had arrived the two warriors whom Captain Pipe had sent with an offering of white wampum to the friends of him Lone-Elk had slain. Not as compensation, not as damages for the injury done, had the gift of wampum pure and white been sent, but as a plea for forgiveness; as a symbol of the slayer's penitence and sorrow.

It was somewhat unusual for an offering of peace to be accepted so long after the crime had been committed, and it was known, too, that Lone-Elk's offense had been particularly cruel. So was there very good reason for the Seneca to shake hands with his Delaware friends and receive their congratulations.

Captain Pipe thought the outcast seemed less truly sorry for his crime than he should have been. He little liked the haughty manner in which the one so lately restored to a place of honor and respect in his own tribe and nation bore himself. Perhaps he thought, also, that

the Seneca was less appreciative of the service rendered him than he should have been. Nevertheless he gave the bold warrior his hand and told him that, though he was now free to return to his own people, he would have a place of honor among the Delawares as long as he chose to remain with them.

John Jerome heard by degrees of what had happened. He wondered if the Seneca would not now be less bitter toward him, and more fair and honorable. But he was grievously disappointed. Lone-Elk showed himself more hostile, if possible, than before; more keen to carry out his plot to avenge the pretended killing of Big Buffalo by witchcraft; more intense in his hatred.

As he learned just how matters stood, John's only hope for escape lay in Return Kingdom and the men of whom Fishing Bird had told him. He knew they would attempt to rescue him, but seeing how greatly they were outnumbered, fear of the outcome worried him more and more. It was bad enough for him to suffer,

he declared within himself, again and again, without dragging Ree and others to the same fate.

The hour of the council to inquire into the guilt of the prisoner arrived. The Indians assembled and once again John found himself in the long, low bark house where always in the past he had met the Delawares as friends. Captain Pipe and every buck and warrior of the village was in attendance; but more conspicuous than any of them, more proud and more erect, was Lone-Elk, the Seneca. In his hands he held the hatchet brought by him from the cornfield of the young Palefaces, the hatchet with which, he said, Big Buffalo had been slain. It was the evidence that would substantiate his story of the witch's work.

Captain Pipe stated the purpose of the council briefly and quietly. Then he informed the prisoner that the Delawares would hear what he had to say, but urged him to confess his sin and not, on the eve of death, be guilty of a lie.

With face and body blackened, his hands

bound to a stick behind him, the accused boy arose. He tried to be bold and fearless, but, though he looked the Indians squarely in the eyes, he could not speak as he wished to do. His voice did not falter, but the words seemed somehow to refuse to come.

The charge against him was false, he said, and time would prove it. Never except in fair fight had he harmed any Indian. He would leave it to Captain Pipe to judge if he had not always conducted himself as a friend of the Delawares. He reminded them how, only the past winter, he had brought their women and children food while the able men were away for the fighting that had taken place. With a suppressed sigh as he saw how little impression he had made on the hostile faces round him, John sat down.

In an instant Lone-Elk was on his feet. With head thrown back and flashing eyes he repeated the story of the cloud which drifted over the lake—repeated again the whole miserable tale he had told so many times before. Then he ex-

hibited the hatchet taken from the shock of corn on which a crow of most strange appearance had the same day been seen.

“Lone-Elk well knows who put the tomahawk where he got it, Captain Pipe,” the prisoner found courage to say. But for doing so the warriors beside him smartly rapped his head with their knuckles, and the Seneca gave him a look of hate so fierce, so vindictive it startled him.

“The white brother’s time for speech is over,” the chief made answer coldly, and Lone-Elk now resuming his seat, he said: “The Delawares will hear any who wish to speak further.”

A travel-stained figure glided swiftly from the door to Captain Pipe’s side and spoke to him in quick, low tones that few could hear. It was Fishing Bird.

“There are Palefaces who wait with a white flag, Palefaces who wish to be heard,” the chief announced, in the Delaware tongue. “Fishing Bird may bring them here.”

Lone-Elk, with glaring eyes, rose hastily and would have remonstrated but with a kindly, yet imperious wave of his hand Captain Pipe motioned to him to sit down, and he obeyed.

In another minute Return Kingdom, followed by five other white men, stepped into the Council House.

“Captain Pipe,” said Kingdom at once, “we have put down our guns and come here without arms to say a few words to the Delawares which they may be surprised to hear. The Delawares are in council and it is a proper time to speak to them. We ask nothing more than that you let us be heard.”

“The Delawares will listen to White Fox,” the chief answered. “While the council lasts we shall be as friends. When it is over the Paleface brothers may go their way.”

“We thank Captain Pipe and all the Delawares,” Kingdom answered in clear, loud, friendly tones. “We have come to you with important news. We are received as your friends and we shall be such while in your vil-

lage. The news we bring will not be pleasant to all of you. For the Delawares have been deceived. There is one here who has led Captain Pipe and many of his people to believe he knew of a secret mine from which he could supply them with much lead and with bullets."

Kingdom paused for an instant, and as he did so Lone-Elk for the first time caught sight of Lobb standing between two of the woodsmen. The look he darted toward the fellow was venomous. There is no doubt but what he thought the Englishman had revealed his secret, then led the white men thither to betray him.

But after the one quick, black look the Seneca seemed quite indifferent to the presence of any of the white men. He concealed his thoughts completely and the Delawares who cast questioning glances toward him were amazed at his composure. Not so with Captain Pipe, however. He had seen on Lone-Elk's brow the awful scowl which came and went so quickly, and to him it spoke volumes.

The pause in Kingdom's speech was very

short, and few of the Delawares noticed for a time the effect his words had produced upon their chief. It was not until later that they saw on his face the fixed expression of stony coldness dreaded by all of them.

“There is one among you who has sought to advance himself and his own ambitions by taking advantage of the other Indians,” Kingdom went on. “Three white men were sent from Detroit with lead, bullets, powder and gold for the Delawares and other warriors hereabouts. To one Indian only were the lead and bullets and powder given. True, he gave them to the Delawares, but he led them to believe that from a secret mine did he obtain the supplies he brought them. So did he gain power and influence with Captain Pipe’s people.

“Now, hear me further. Two of the three men sent by the British to carry stores from Detroit for the Delawares and others have been murdered. The third man killed them. He has confessed his crime and told the whole story of why the Indians did not all share

equally in the goods brought for them. This man is here!"

Putting all the emphasis he could muster into his closing sentences, Kingdom signalled his friends as he concluded, and Lobb, trembling and ashy pale, was pushed into the foreground.

"You have heard what I have told the Delawares," Kingdom quietly said. "Do you know if it is true?"

The boy's voice was calm and low, but in the death-like silence of the Council House every word was plainly heard by all, and with intensest interest the savages awaited the answer.

"Yes; it's true," muttered Lobb with a look half of terror, half of appeal and apology toward the Seneca.

"Now point to the one who received the gifts intended for all the Indians, not for him alone," Kingdom commanded.

The murderer looked anxiously about him. He trembled so he could hardly stand, but made no other move.

“Point!” thundered Kingdom. “You know him well!”

“There!” came with a groan from the frightened fellow’s lips, and his outstretched finger indicated Lone-Elk.

On the Seneca’s face there was an expression so threatening that even Kingdom was alarmed. But he continued his talk boldly.

“He who has deceived the Delawares in one way will deceive them in another. Will they listen when his voice is raised against one who has always been their friend? Will the Delawares allow him to shield himself from suspicion by telling them Big Buffalo was killed by witchcraft? Will they do this? Are the Delawares men? Have they not honor and fairness?”

Kingdom would have said more, and trouble would most certainly have followed, had Captain Pipe permitted it. The Indians were becoming dangerously excited. Jim Small and the other woodsmen, too, were anticipating a row,

while John Jerome was on the verge of cheering.

The Delaware chief may have seen what the talk was leading toward; at any rate he quickly rose, commanding silence, and straightway began an address such as his people never before had heard and which no one present could ever forget. His voice was not loud. His tones were those of sorrow rather than anger, but he put into them so much of stern honesty and both reproof and reproach, that his every word was like a knife point. He said:

“There came to the Delawares a fugitive and an outcast. In a moment of anger he had taken the life of one who was raised up over him by his people, the noble Senecas. Still he proved himself in heavy fighting a loyal Indian and a mighty warrior. So did the Delawares open their doors to him. He was given places of honor. When time had passed, and the scar of his crime was old, a present of white wampum was sent to the kindred of the dead Seneca asking their forgiveness.

“This very day have the messengers of the Delawares returned bringing pardon full and free for the stranger among them. Yet this very day do the Delawares learn that they have been treated as children; deceived and misled by him they helped.

“They would have adopted him as one of their own nation, but he has returned their hospitality with lies, their kindest thoughts with evil.

“Of the death of Big Buffalo the Delawares will now inquire among themselves. Witchcraft is an enemy if it exists. The Delawares will learn the truth. But the Seneca must go. Let him leave the town and the hunting grounds of our people forever. Go!”

Waving his right hand haughtily toward Lone-Elk, Captain Pipe concluded, and a flush of anger awful to see came to his face as the Seneca sat still, his whole attitude one of indifference and contempt.

As the chieftain was about to repeat his stern command in even sterner tones, Lone-Elk rose

to his feet. For a second or two he toyed with the tomahawk he still held in his hands. Then in insolent tones, both contemptuous and contemptible, and, glaring up and down the rows of faces upturned to him, he said:

“Lone-Elk is a Seneca. Never had he a thought of becoming a Delaware. Why should a Seneca warrior put himself among squaws? For food; for rest. Nothing more. Lone-Elk did not so much as ask that the belt of white wampum be sent to the friends of a Seneca that is dead. He asked no favors of any Delaware. Some of your foolish young men pointed their fingers at Lone-Elk when Big Buffalo was found dead in the bushes by the water. For his amusement Lone-Elk told them of a witch. Like squaws they heard every word. Like children they must hear over and over again and could not have enough. Like children, too, did the Delawares open their ears and their eyes to hear a legend of a hidden mine of lead. Ugh! A warrior sickens over them and is glad to go.”

For a full second the Seneca paused and

looked disdainfully about him. There was anger in every Delaware's face.

But suddenly Lone-Elk's demeanor changed. An exclamation of wrath awful to hear burst from his lips.

"There stands the two-tongued Paleface squaw who killed your dead Big Buffalo!" he cried, and shook his fist toward the quaking Lobb. "Lone-Elk trusted a two-faced black dog of a Paleface! That is the Seneca's crime! When the Harvest Festival was held this dog was hiding in the brushes. Big Buffalo stumbled upon him there and kicked him, like the dog that he is. They seized each other by the throats. The grip of the dog was stronger than the warrior's grip. Big Buffalo was killed. Lone-Elk has long known this. But why should he tell the Delawares? Why tell the Delawares, to save two Paleface spies, cheating and lying to the Indians and hunting on their land?"

"Still, the Delawares are but squaws. They have no place among the mighty nations. Lone-Elk is glad to leave them. The Delawares will

never see him again. Let them, then, tell their children that once a mighty warrior lived among them."

Not deigning to glance again toward Captain Pipe or any of the others present, but with his eyes fixed on Lobb alone, the Seneca quickly turned toward the door.

Before his intention was suspected, he swiftly raised the tomahawk in his right hand, high above his head and brought it down on the skull of the white murderer.

With a stifled cry that ended in a sickening groan, Lobb sunk to the ground, and the Indian strode haughtily into the open air, still clutching the blood-stained hatchet.

CHAPTER IX

FAREWELL FOREVER

The killing of Lobb was as nothing to the Delawares in comparison to the words Lone-Elk had spoken, and the greatest confusion followed his sudden departure. Many Indians and two of the woodsmen rushed out as if to seize the Seneca, but he was gone. For an instant they caught sight of him among the trees, walking rapidly away, with head erect and shoulders squared. Not once did he look back.

Why no one went in pursuit of Lone-Elk might be hard to explain; but certain it is that neither Indian nor white man so much as called after him. Perhaps what was every one's business was no one's business. At any rate the Seneca went his way unmolested, and those who had hurried out after him soon returned to the Council House where, between them, Captain Pipe and Kingdom had succeeded in restoring

quiet—the former by ordering the Delawares to be silent; the latter by cautioning his friends to keep cool.

Sergeant Quayle had sought to lift the unfortunate Lobb up the moment he fell, but found his task useless. The murderer was dead, and no wonder, for the gaping wound in his head was both wide and deep.

Quayle still knelt over the lifeless body when the confusion had subsided; but seeing with what horror even the savages regarded the dead man's fallen jaw and staring eyes, truly a most terrible sight, he covered the corpse with his coat.

An embarrassing silence followed the noise and commotion the tragedy had occasioned, and for a few seconds the quiet was dreadful. The Indians were in no good humor. The woodsmen were ripe and ready for trouble and Kingdom understood only too well the gravity of the situation. But he grappled with it boldly and successfully.

“Captain Pipe,” he said, with quiet dignity.

“A murder has been committed. A white man has been killed while under the flag of truce. It is not enough to say that he deserved his death. Of course we realize that the Delawares are not exactly to blame. Still we have all learned how Big Buffalo died and we have seen the murderer punished. Now will the Delawares not agree that they no longer have a reason for holding Little Paleface a prisoner?”

“Like the Delawares have the young Paleface brothers suffered for the sins of another,” Captain Pipe made answer. “They will yield the prisoner to his friends. Yet do the Delawares urge the Paleface young men to leave the lands of the Indians and, until there is peace, come back no more. They know, as the Delawares know, that it is not safe. The blood of our warriors is heated. The braves are in war-paint. For the Little Paleface and for White Fox the Delawares will have only kind thoughts. They have been good friends. The Indians have been glad to visit them and trade with them.

“Yet is it wise that they travel their separate paths alone. The ways of the Paleface are not the ways of the Indian. The Great Spirit has made them both as they are and they cannot be otherwise. Time and the conflicts that every day take place will at last draw a line between them and there will be peace and happiness. To the west will live the Indians as the Great Spirit has taught them to do. To the east, the Palefaces will cut down trees, drive off the game and build and dwell in noisy towns. It is as they have been taught. Still, only by war can the line of separation be drawn, and it is well for the Delawares and their Paleface brothers to go in different ways. Today the trail they have followed together divides. They say farewell. They hope for friendship’s sake their paths may never meet in war.”

With a few words in reply Kingdom hurried to John Jerome, whom the warriors quickly loosened from his bonds. The two boys clasped hands in silence.

Fishing Bird had already sent Long-Hair and

Little Wolf for John's rifle and other belongings and when the lad had shaken hands with Neohaw, Gentle Maiden and Captain Pipe, his property was handed him.

Ree also took leave of the Indians whose friendship he had once enjoyed and, two of the woodsmen bearing the body of the Englishman, all the white men left the village.

Silently, their untamed spirits for the time subdued, the Indians gathered near the Council House to watch the departure of the Palefaces. To the portage trail Ree and John were accompanied by Fishing Bird. They asked him to go with them—to remain with them permanently. He shook his head.

“Paleface brothers heard the words of Captain Pipe,” he said, significantly but sorrowfully, and they said good-bye forever.

An hour later, beside the portage path, the great highway of the wilderness, the body of Lobb was buried; and the sun went down and darkness enveloped the vast forest and all within it.

CHAPTER X

ON THE WAY TO WAYNE'S CAMP

Beside their campfire, near the spot where a mossy stone marked Lobb's last resting place, the two boys and their friends discussed their future movements. All were interested in visiting the murderer's camp in the ravine, and Jim Small declared his intention of making search for the Seneca's lead mine. He believed the Indian had some good reason for telling the Delawares he knew of such a mine, and, though the others did not agree with him, he held to his theory.

In substance Small's idea was that, inasmuch as out-and-out lying was not an Indian trait, Lone-Elk must have had some basis for his story more than had been discovered. However, time proved that this theory was not well founded. Jim was right in his assertion that Indians did not make lying a practice, but in

this as well as in his ambition to be a leader, whatever the cost, the Seneca was less honorable than Indians were as a rule, before trickery and firewater had corrupted them.

Despite their fatigue and the day's exciting events, the woodsmen and the two boys remained awake far into the night. They were alert and watchful, however, for the older men placed no confidence whatever in the savages, and all screened themselves from sight by lying down among the bushes near which their fire was built.

Resting thus, and speaking in low tones, John told the story of his adventure and in turn heard with great interest the story of Lobb's capture and confession. There were tears in Ree's eyes when Jerome described the burning of the cabin, and for the first time he felt in his heart a hatred deep and endless toward the Indians as a whole.

The Sergeant and his men were astonished to learn of the many lively skirmishes the two pioneer boys had had with the savages at differ-

ent times, and expressed their wonder that both had not been scalped long ago.

“Ye’ll deserve it, too, if ever ye come to these hostile parts ag’in,” Quayle told them. “Whist! It beats all, so it do, that mere spalpeens get through where whiskers a full foot long can’t go!”

The morning came, cold and raw, with a feeling of snow in the air. With some haste the little party ate a breakfast of roasted smoked meat and resumed the march toward the gully. They paused for half an hour in the clearing and Ree and John soon found Neb, sheltering himself from the wind, back of a clump of bushes. Every particle of harness had been destroyed by the fire, and only a strip of buckskin could be found wherewith to lead the horse. Neb was very docile, however, and upon his willing back a roughly fashioned pack was soon placed. It contained corn and potatoes from the fields the boys had cultivated, and various articles of baggage of which the woodsmen were glad to be relieved.

Before leaving the clearing Ree and John went again to the heap of ashes which marked the cabin site. Together they surveyed the ruins and were glad of the opportunity to speak to each other some words of sympathy their companions would not hear. As they did so, John noticed sticking in the half-burned end of a log a blood-stained tomahawk.

“Look! Lone-Elk came here!” he said.

“I declare,” returned Kingdom solemnly, “his hatred is something almost more than human. Venting his feelings by leaving that hatchet at this spot! I suppose he intends it as a warning!”

Neither boy was disposed to touch the weapon and they left it—left it and the remnants of their fallen hopes and castles among the ashes of the cabin. Ree sighed as they turned away. “But still,” he said, brightening, “we have enough to be thankful for, after all.”

It was nearly noon when the camp in the gully was reached. Apparently no one had been near since the capture of Lobb, and no

reason to doubt the truthfulness of the story the guilty wretch had told could be discovered, excepting that no gold was found.

“We’d orter got that ’fore we took the heathen away,” said one of the woodsmen, and the others agreed.

Ree and John, however, did not greatly care. With the others, they made careful search of the vicinity, however. Nothing did they find except a few articles of food, some cooking utensils, a bullet mold and a quantity of lead and powder in the low, shallow cave concealed among the bushes. All the afternoon was given up to hunting for the lead mine and the gold thought to be hidden near by. But the Seneca’s mine, if he had one, remains undiscovered to this day. Neither was the slightest trace of the treasure sent for the Indians, but who never received it, found.

The searchers made camp at night near the hollow whitewood, whose sheltering trunk protected Ree, John and the Sergeant. The others scoffed good-naturedly, saying the first three

were no better than bears. Nevertheless the tree was a very comfortable place, and especially on this occasion, for during the night much snow fell.

The desirability of reaching Wayne's camp as soon as possible was apparent to all members of the party and rapid marching was agreed upon. A halt of a half day for hunting, with the result that a quantity of fresh venison and several turkeys were carried into camp, was the only delay in the journey to the east, and the distance of nearly one hundred miles was covered in a little more than five days.

Gen. Wayne sent for both Kingdom and Jerome the day following their arrival and from them heard a full account of the salt springs murder, the death of Lobb, and the indisputable evidence that the British at Detroit were extending aid to the redskins throughout the Northwest territory. He cautioned the boys that they must not think of returning to their clearing, and, thinking perhaps of the military ambitions of his own boyhood, the sham battles

he had arranged and fought, and the sieges he had planned, asked them if they would like to join his "Legion." It was by this name that he always called the army he was assembling.

Thanking him, and saying they would like to think of his offer and talk it over, the lads took leave of the great soldier, feeling very well satisfied with themselves.

CHAPTER XI

JOINING THE LEGION

Both John Jerome and Return Kingdom at first were rather perplexed as to which course they ought to pursue. Sheer inclination led them to think of the pleasure of going back to Connecticut. The ties of old association and memory were strong. At the same time, despite the ruin of their new-made home back yonder near the Delaware village and the sense of the serious material loss thereby sustained, each felt a vague longing to see this thing through; and not to confess, by giving up and going back east, that their struggles in this western wilderness had been in vain.

In the first place they liked General Wayne. His great reputation during the Revolution and the many honors bestowed on him by Washing-

ton and the Continental Congress impressed them greatly. Moreover, the sight of Wayne's constantly increasing army, its daily drilling, maintained through all weathers, gave a new insight to them as to what a real "Legion" commanded by such a veteran leader might accomplish in serious warfare. The boasting language of Chief Hopocon, or Captain Pipe, seemed now overdrawn and exaggerated. With the natural enthusiasm of youth, they sensed what an ultimate triumph over these western tribes would mean, not only to the States themselves but to the disappointed British. The States must eventually expand. As for the Indians, was there not unlimited territory to the west where these hindering savages might roam and find homes more free and extensive than those they would abandon?

"I tell you, John," began Ree that night as they sat round the fire in the camp where Sergeant Quayle, Jim Small and the other two had made the boys welcome, "I feel mightily inclined to accept General Wayne's invitation.

We couldn't fight under a better leader. What do you think, Sergeant?"

"I'm with ye, lad. Belave me, there won't be no St. Clair business whin *we* git through with 'em. D'ye note how ould Wayne keeps drillin' the boys? Not so much fer standin' in line an' presentin' arms as to shootin' straight, kapin' thur eyes open, and deployin' whin necessary without gettin' mixed up or crowdin' wan another."

"We've noticed all that," replied John, "and I feel just like Ree here. It is true I'm not very fit just now. What I went through with back yonder" (meaning his harsh treatment by the savages while a prisoner) "and all, makes me feel rather worn out. But I am like my comrade and I am in favor of joining the Legion if my strength will hold out."

"I've noticed that you aren't up to hard work like you used to be." Ree was regarding his friend with an anxious eye. "But I think we will be here in camp for some time yet. You can rest up meanwhile."

“Yiss, yiss!” This from Quayle, gently patting John’s shoulder. “Take a good rest, me boy. Eat hearty, dodge the physic when the doctor comes round and you’ll be all right-o in a few days.”

One thing that cheered the boys up mightily was that in the next post from Fort Pitt, brought on horseback by two armed soldiers, were letters from home.

The General sent for them in the morning and handed the two several letters with the good old Connecticut seal thereon. Ree’s was especially welcome. It was from Mary Catesby, a girl Ree had always admired. Among other things that made Kingdom color with pleasure was the following:

“I know both you and John well enough to feel that neither of you will be willing to give up your plans for making a home in the west. That is all right. I rather like the idea of you going to a new country and growing up with the others there. It must greatly appeal to you both. But you must not forget that you

and John have left friends behind who don't like the idea of never seeing you again. Stay as long as you like. But when you have that home, come back as you can, and—who knows?—perhaps you might have company when you return. Your name is Return, isn't it? Why, then, should you not first return here? If you and John go back alone—well, won't it be largely your own fault?

“Whatever you do, please be careful of yourselves. There is going to be fighting out there. Even we girls have heard enough to know that. We hear that Mad Anthony Wayne is already out there raising an army. I've heard folks say that wherever General Wayne is, trouble is brewing. He never knows when to stop. I guess that is the reason they call him Mad Anthony. If you *must* go along, it will be all right. But do take care of yourselves! And, wherever you settle, try and get somewhere that you will be safe. Your friends here want you and John to keep your scalps on your own heads. Your wife—if you should have one

later—could not pull your hair if you had lost yours, could she? How I *am* running on!”

When John read this he first sighed for well he knew the warm feeling that had long existed between Mary Catesby and Ree. Then he smiled, saying:

“You’re a lucky dog, Ree! She only includes me in that advice she is giving because—well, because she is a girl!”

“Well, why don’t you get a girl, John?”

“Isn’t that likely!” Ree was folding up his letter and thrusting it inside his hunting shirt—in the region where John supposed his heart was. “Our only home is now in ashes, and we would not dare go back to it, if it wasn’t. Not after all that has lately happened.”

“You’re right, boy! We can’t go back to our cabin because there’s no longer any cabin there. But the surest way to make any other home that we may build or own safe is to help as we can and see General Wayne through. What was in your letter, John?”

“Just one from the folks I lived with last.

They want me to come back and stay with them. They know trouble is brewing out here, and that where General Wayne is, there will it rage hot and heavy. I'm willing to go back; but not now. If my health holds out, if I keep strong, Ree, we will see this thing through."

They shook hands on that. The following day they joined the Legion and were duly mustered in, being assigned to the company in which Sergeant Quayle and his squad were already installed.

"It do beat the nation how all the young men be afther wantin' to j'ine," said that veteran after again bidding the boys to make themselves at home. "That is, so far as the 'tarnal drillin' and practisin' will let ye. Whin we'll go west there's no knowin'. It might be in a week, thin ag'in it might be a month or two. Hi-yo! What's this?"

An intruder had stepped into the firelight. He came from the General, who desired the two boys to accompany him back to headquarters.

Once more in the General's tent, Wayne eyed both boys sharply. They meanwhile saluted in true military style. This not always being followed in that free and easy frontier life by privates meeting an officer, caused Mad Anthony's eyes to twinkle approvingly. Tapping the table at which he sat with a finger, he looked again at each sharply. Then addressing John Jerome, he said:

"You don't look well. Were your experiences while a prisoner the cause of this?"

"Yes, sir. What I need more than anything else is a short rest and—and good grub, sir. At times I am feverish, and I—"

"Yes, yes! I know," interrupted Wayne. "You will be released from drill and guard duty for a few days. We don't want sick men along when we start."

Turning to Kingdom, the General continued:

"It is necessary that we should have further knowledge of the exact condition among the Shawnees, Delawares, and other tribes inhabiting the Ohio country. If possible, while we are

waiting here preparing for a spring campaign, I wish to obtain information as to the numbers, the preparedness, and the general present state of these nearer tribes. I noted the friendly relations existing between you two and that Delaware prisoner whom you persuaded me to liberate. It is evident that your comrade is in no fit condition to accompany you. What he needs is rest, for a time at least. Will you undertake to be one of a party to be sent out shortly for these purposes?"

Ree looked at John, for he naturally felt that, as they two had always been together in all enterprises, he wished to see how John took the idea. John looked non-committal, but was evidently acquiescent.

"All right, sir," replied Kingdom. "When we joined the Legion, we both felt that whatever we were called upon to do, there would be no back-down. I feel sure that my comrade's main feeling now is one of regret that he may not be well enough to go, too."

"That is the right spirit, my lad." A grim

smile, almost cheery, gleamed athwart the General's face as he further said:

"You will hold yourself in readiness, Kingdom—is not that your name?" Wayne scanned a memorandum he had. "And you, Jerome," eyeing John again sharply, "you will remain here and try to get well and strong as soon as possible. I may later need further information. In that case, if you are well enough you will get your chance. That is all, I believe."

When the boys were back in their quarters, John managed to say:

"Don't I wish I was well enough to go with you! We never have been separated long before, have we?"

"N-no. But we've just got to do our duty as it is given out to us. You know that, John. I hope Quayle will be in my party. He knows the woods pretty well."

"Hi, boys! Look at this!" And the man just then mentioned rushed into the hut with a paper in one hand. Clapping the other on Kingdom's shoulder: "Old Anthony just told

me I was to take a party of six, includin' meself, and git ready for the woods ag'in. It do bate the worruld how the Ginerall kapes some of us busy. I want you, Kingdom. I want Jerome too, but he's in no condition for another tramp—be ye, boy?"

"I'm afraid not. But the General says that later I may have a chance. Do you think the army will be here long, Sergeant?"

"How the divvil would I know more'n you lads? Old Wayne's great for gettin' men in foine shape fer fightin'. But when he gits 'em that-a way, thin he belaves in puttin' 'em through. By his sendin' out these scoutin' parties it looks as if we'd be movin' by 'arly spring, anyhow."

"Who is going along, Sergeant?" asked Kingdom. "Will Jim Small be—"

"Yiss, he'll be with us. And there'll be three more. Men that know somethin' about the Ohio country to the west of us; that is, if he can git 'em. But I must be off. Gither up your

things, Ree, and be ready at any time. Like as not we'll leave within a day or so. P'raps sooner."

Reconciling themselves to the necessity of a separation, both John and Ree remained in close conference and also were busy letter writing. Each of them wrote home and John pledged himself to see that the letters were forwarded to Fort Pitt at the first opportunity.

"We've passed through so much together, Ree," remarked John during the evening, "that it makes me feel lonesome seeing you go away. Whatever happens, we must stick it out together after this war is all over."

"Provided we're both then alive, John. And I hope we will be. Do you know I think that Wayne intends us more for scouting duty than merely as soldiers with the bulk of the Legion. And yet, compared with some of those who were our friends back in the Delaware village, we don't know so much about this wilderness, after all. But we can learn."

“Yes, we can and we will. One thing is certain, if you should be captured I—I’ll never rest until I get you free again.”

Kingdom eyed his comrade warmly; yet even he did not realize that there was anything in what John had said that was likely to be true. Capture? That did not worry Ree. What worried him most then was that he must be off again, leaving his mate behind. Notwithstanding this nearing event both heartily enjoyed their supper prepared by the camp cooks, and it did Kingdom good to note that John ate nearly as much as he. Kingdom’s capacity to hold food was no minor affair in their daily routine, either.

The boys were already preparing their beds for the night when who should appear but Jim Small, now a corporal, who pushed the wooden hinged cabin door open, saying:

“Well, boys, I’ve come for one of ye. Wayne’s sent us a guide, and as there’s some moon about midnight, the feller wants to start then.”

“Do we really start to-night, Jim?” Here Ree, remembering, saluted merrily.

“Aw, cut that out, boy. Bein’ corp’ral’s nothin’ ’cept more duty and prancin’ about seein’ that your squad’s in line. Holy smoke! ’Bout the only line we’ll be in now will be goin’ single file through the woods, and not keepin’ step either. We’ll be too busy watchin’ out fer redskins, I reckon.”

Small withdrew, mentioning where Ree was to report as soon as he was ready, and John, feeling more like aiding the other, said but little. Presently the two were wending their way towards an outlying hut at the edge of the woods, somewhat apart from the rows of cabins occupied by the soldiers in general.

A tall figure, not unlike that of the typical “leatherstocking,” later so vividly portrayed by Fenimore Cooper in his stories under that title, stood by the fire. His lank, sinewy form, garbed mostly in skins tanned and dressed in frontier style, the long rifle on which he leaned, the leather sheathed hunting knife, the grizzled

aspect of head and face, made at once a vivid impression on both boys. This scout sent by Wayne was evidently fully familiar with the forest life as led by those bold frontier rangers that for many years had rendered the gradual advance of the white man upon the haunts of the red a perpetual zone of danger to the settlers that always followed behind. At sight of the last arrivals he straightened up, shook hands with the boys, and shouldered his pack as he remarked:

“We’uns had better be stirrin’, I reckon. The road to the ferry is easy follered, and we want to be on the Trace Trail by time the moon rises.”

“John,” whispered Kingdom, “you’ll see after Neb and Phœbe, won’t you? Find a way to keep ’em if you can. If not, sell them to whoever gives the best price.”

“I won’t sell them, Ree,” replied John. “Being as I am on the sick list, I’ll have plenty of time to look after them myself. They’ve

done us good service and I hope will do us more yet."

The farewells were soon said and presently the adventurers were swinging along the trail towards the river at an easy gait behind Jason Boone who, being from "Kaintucky," naturally claimed later to be a near "kin" to the noted Daniel Boone himself. Perhaps he was; surely his looks, manner and easy familiarity with forest ways, trails and methods might justify such claim.

They crossed the river by the small ferry boat and soon found themselves upon the Trace Trail that was for many years the main course of travel between old Fort Pitt and the regions occupied by Shawnees, Delawares, and other tribes west of the Cuyahoga and Muskingum. Unbroken forest marked the region, growing more wild and less traveled as they advanced.

At an easy, swinging pace that was surprisingly speedy the figure of Boone kept unerringly ahead. The moon, already up, gave dim but

adequate light. The woods were still, the air frosty and nipping; the occasional wail of an owl, the shrill howl of a wolf, and the twitter of various tree frogs and other minute night denizens of the woods, were the only accompaniments of the march until, towards morning, they entered a small clearing, still stump spotted, where Jason Boone said a friend of his lived. "His cabin should be down in that thar holler."

He pointed at a mass of trees ahead, whereat Kingdom detected a faint blur of what he took to be smoke.

"You must be right," said the lad. "Don't you see the chimney smoke?"

"Smoke? Not at this time: it's too 'arly yit." He was peering with hand shaded eyes. "I ain't so young as I oncet was, but—but—Gawdamity! Thar's been trouble down thar. Foller me, men!" And he plunged ahead along the almost indistinguishable trail at a rate the rest followed with difficulty, old woodsmen as they were.

Surmounting a slight knoll near the edge of

the clearing, a low, reddish glow was revealed through the fringe of timber. Before them a shallow, well timbered bottom opened, with a creek crookedly winding through, close to which were smouldering embers of what a few hours before had been the home of an adventurous settler.

“By mighty!” broke from Jason Boone as the sight and what it might mean dawned upon him and the rest. “‘Thar’s been a raidin’ party of them hellish redskins here. Men, I stayed all night here two days back. Never was treated better in my life. Come on, men! Foller me!” And he dashed down the timbered slope at a speed that left every one but Ree lagging behind.

CHAPTER XII

FURTHER WEST

Arrived at the small clearing where house and garden had been, all that now confronted the party was the mass of smouldering ruins, not only of the cabin but the stable outhouse. The slight fencing was torn down and the small garden uprooted. From beneath the edge of the wreckage they found several bodies, nearly naked, their scalps torn off. The bedding and other household fixings were either gone or destroyed by the flames, which had died down only because there was nothing more to burn.

The man, a middle-aged worker, his wife and two small children had composed the family, so Jason said. The half eaten bodies of two beeves were near the stable. Even the body of a slain dog was there.

“They had an old horse, but I guess they must have used it to carry off what plunder they took. Oh, the rascals! I wisht I had ’em back here!”

His manner and his clenched hands gripping the long rifle indicated that Boone would have liked nothing better than to have met these red depredators right then. Recalling the ruins of his own home up north on the Cuyahoga, Kingdom felt an instinctive desire to do something desperate, deadly, revengeful.

Just then Jim Small, probing around beyond the garden, saw in the moonlight a shadowy figure moving amid the trees beyond. It was slipping away.

“Halt!” he cried. “Halt—you, or I’ll shoot!” Gripping his gun he blazed away, without further thought.

Almost simultaneously he heard Jason’s voice close behind, saying:

“Ye missed him—missed him!” At the same time Boone, with surer hand, fired after a swift but deadly aim.

A shriek was heard from the timber edge that seemed to bring an outburst of war whoops from the wide fringe of forest across which other shots rang forth.

“Down with ye all!” commanded Quayle.
“Git behind somethin’!”

Needless to state that this command was obeyed almost before it was uttered. Sheltered by stumps each member of the party lay flat or crouched low as chance offered protection. What was their surprise to see emerging from the trees nearly a dozen dark forms that ran forward from tree to tree, yelling, whooping, firing as they came.

“Who’d ’a’ thought to see all this ruction not a day’s march from whar Wayne be drillin’ of his troops? Lay low, youngster! Let ’em fire away. We’ll give ’em no time to reload. Don’t fire—yit, Sargeant!” This to Quayle and the others, all now pretty well together behind a near gable end of the cabin that still presented some semblance to a defense as against an adversary now bent on exposing himself in

his eagerness to slay. Hardly was this advice needed for all of them were practised woodsmen and, though surprised, were capable of taking every offered advantage.

“Now ef they ain’t no more on ’em, we’ve got ’em,” said Jason. “Here they come! Watch ’em—watch out—let ’em have it, each of ye as ye can.”

Irregularly the six half hidden whites began to let the savages have it as best they could. Three of the foe were seen to fall. Just then Boone remembered the log spring-house a few rods away amid a cluster of low trees, whence a trickling rivulet oozed from a spring where the family had kept certain things cool—milk, butter and the like.

“This way, fellers!” cried Jason. “Stoop low and foller me. They’ve got to reload and so’ve we.”

At the word Boone half crawled, half ran along a slight gully, bush lined, while the rest followed, scattering somewhat as the diminished yelling behind grew still nearer. Out in

the open the savages in turn became more cautious and at last delayed their advance, both from caution and the necessity of reloading. Reaching the spring-house, as yet undamaged by either fire or plunder, both Boone and Quayle rearranged their force, at the same time reloading in all haste.

“Hullo!” This from the Kentuckian, looking round. “Whar’s that youngster? Durn me, hev they got him?”

“Can’t be, Jase,” replied Small, adjusting his flint and pouring a mite of powder into the pan of the gunlock that was then the source of ignition to cause the discharge of the piece. “Why, he was right with us a minute or so ago. Reckon one of ’em shots hit him?”

“Not likely. Injuns be no extra shots anyhow and they was runnin’, yellin’, firin’ all to onct.”

What had become of Kingdom? Could he have fallen under that scattering fire at this early stage of the fight? Just then the others could not say, but a little later they knew.

Almost immediately they were so fully occupied with taking care of themselves that they had no time to bestow on Ree's absence other than to hope that he was still alive somewhere.

The savages, now sheltered here and there, were resuming their firing at the spring-house, from whence now and then a rifle blazed, usually with such effect that one or two more of the redskins were either crippled or slain. Boone's gun was particularly deadly, his aim sure, and his composure unruffled.

Finally another yell from further back seemed to denote that the foe was being reinforced though to what extent those inside the spring-house could not say.

Daylight was approaching, and a gray haze filtered down through the woods. Some movement was going on behind the shrubbery about them. The hostile firing had partially ceased.

All at once the Indians raised a peculiar war whoop which Jason seemed to understand. He motioned for the others to load up, to keep their pistols charged for what might happen.

Though they could look through the cracks between the logs, which same afforded a good chance to aim and shoot, but little could be seen of the savages except the flashes from their guns.

As the peculiar whoop rose up all hands crouching in the inside gloom saw the end of a heavy, pole-like log emerge through the bushes, pointing straight at the door of the spring-house. It projected several feet before the human source of propulsion became visible.

All at once it lunged forward. Then nearly a dozen dark forms were visible charging forward, bearing the log between them. Boone was the first to profit by this unlooked-for maneuver.

“Git ready and fire!” he exclaimed, levelling his gun through the cracks. “Quick—quick!”

Amid a fusillade of sudden shots the pole advanced, wavering as the bearers felt bullets pierce them or whistle by, but finally it struck the door with a force that partially shattered the thin rived boards.

“We got to fight now, hand to hand!” This from Sergeant Quayle, clubbing his gun. “No time to load, boys!”

Though several savages had fallen, their numbers were more than equal to the whites within. Just as the savages, yelling, swinging their tomahawks, were plunging at the shattered door there came sounds of shots from their rear—at least three; perhaps more. At each shot a redskin fell, either wounded or dying. In the same instant, those beleaguered within saw Kingdom emerge from the bushes behind the assaulting Indians and hurry forward, his rifle clubbed, after hurling his hatchet that he had drawn and cleaving the skull of the nearest savage. The first glimpse of the boy they feared was dead thus pushing into the thick of the fight stirred the besieged as nothing else could.

“Wow, boys!” shouted Quayle. “Give ’em hell! Rah for the kid!”

“Bet we will!” shouted Small, his tall form charging into the midst of the now dismayed

savages as the whites, emerging in a swift moving body, launched themselves fully upon what was left of the Indians.

It was all over in less than a minute. Several dead or crippled Indians lay before the door of the spring-house, but the others had already vanished amid the close-knit undergrowth that grew about the spring except where the path had been cut and the rivulet trickled through to the creek below.

“Say, boy,” shouted Quayle, grasping Ree’s hand with a hearty shake, “you butted in just in time. How’d you git separated from the rest of us?”

“I—I hardly know. Somehow, in the skirmish I found myself off on one side. Before I could get straightened out some fresh Indians had gotten in where I was kind of cut off, when you all made your break for the spring-house.”

“What did you do then, son?” asked Boone, his eyes twinkling shrewdly.

“Nothing much but lay low until I saw what

they were up to. They picked up a long pole that lay near and I saw that they meant to sidle through the bushes, watching their chance to bust in the door. There was a dozen or so, besides what had fallen. I knew we were outnumbered; so I loaded my gun, and saw that my pistols were also ready. Then when they were bustin' through, I jumped out and let 'em have it as best I could. 'Twasn't much, but—"

"It was a heap, boy," said Small. "It turned the tables on 'em. They didn't know but there was more white men with you, bein' as we're yet so near Wayne's whole army. Anyhow it put 'em in such a shape that they soon scattered through the bush. I guess they're on the run yit."

After that the party, gathering up the arms of the dead savages, for Boone and others had made the rounds, killing the few wounded and scalping all the dead, in frontier fashion, debated what had best be done next.

"We'll eat a bite of cold grub and we'll

bury poor Nath Bush and his family; then we'll hike on out'n here. Them Injuns belong to some war party and they'll be snoopin' back here soon." Thus spoke Boone to the rest, and his advice was taken.

Assigning two of the party as lookouts, the bodies of the settler and his family were hastily interred near where they had been found. The weapons of the dead Indians were divided among the six, an extra firearm being then looked upon as an asset.

Having eaten the cold food still remaining in their skin haversacks, Boone again took the westward trail, while all hands had turns scouting through the woods on either side until the whole party were well beyond the vicinity where this unlooked-for fight had occurred. All day the march continued, and though not more than a score of miles was covered, all were weary enough when the early winter's day began to close in. Not one had complained, all being determined to stick it out until Jason himself gave the word to stop.

They were following a small river bottom not many miles from an Indian town formerly known as Wakatomika, but which had been long abandoned as a consequence of paleface settlements pushing westward from the Ohio River. At last Boone, turning to the others, pointed at a low string of wooded bluffs to the left and said:

“Thar’s a few caves up thar, men. I ’low you’re tired. It’s been years since I camped ’long here, but I ’low them caves are thar yit. Them Injuns as got away from us back yander must ’a’ struck off southard. I guess we’uns have got out’n their range. We’ll make camp ’fore a cave right up thar,” pointing to the nearest bluff, its base closely lined by thick undergrowth. “I’m goin’ to git us a deer. Thar’s a lick near here. Want to go ’long, boy?”

This to Ree, in whom Boone had taken a friendly interest since his decisive conduct against the savages at the Bush home.

“Yes, indeed! I’m tired of shoulderin’ my

gun. Would like to get where there's a chance to bring down something besides a redskin."

"Ye'll know the place by the old campfire ashes, boys. Get up some wood and have a good fire goin'. Broiled venison wouldn't go bad to-night, would it?"

"Bet yore life! It will save our lives, Jase," said Quayle. "The two sides of my stomach feel like they're about to meet. But don't ye stay away all night. We've 'bout eat up our cold grub, and something better has got to be had."

"Keep a sharp watch-out. I don't 'low thar's any Injuns within miles of us, but you never kin tell."

"Arrah now! Don't ye be worryin'. We'll have things ready."

Leaving Boone with Kingdom to make their way to a well-known salt lick, the others followed Boone's directions to where the signs of old campfires were faintly visible. There they began their preparations for a fire. So busy were they, for all were hungry, that no

one looked for the cave. Suddenly Small remembered. He picked up his rifle and started up through the undergrowth to where he saw the opening under a shelving mass of rock. Then he saw something else, too. It was the nose of a black bear. In an instant he levelled his gun and fired. Over went the bear, which proved to be a small one but in pretty fair condition. The noise of the shot roused those at the campfire and they hurried up there and shouted their congratulations, each in his own frontier way.

“Say, fellers,” remarked Small as they carried the bear down, “it was easy as rollin’ off a log. I guess Boone ain’t so far ahead in shootin’ after all. Hope he’ll get a deer though. I ain’t so awful fond of bear meat.”

“Look ’a here!” This from Quayle, who was begining to skin the animal. “No wonder this b’ar give up easy!”

Examination proved that the creature’s fore leg was broken, and by a ball that had also traversed the back in a way that showed the

animal was practically helpless when Small's bullet pierced its brain. Corporal Jim grinned as he said:

"Anyway, I reckon I put it out of its misery."

Further examination showed that the cave must have been a wintering hole for bear, during the time when they are supposed to intern themselves during the severe cold of mid-winter.

With all the chaffing, the party were still enjoying themselves when Boone and Kingdom returned with the news that at the lick they had narrowly avoided collision with another war party of Indians making from northward towards the Miami River.

"Might have been goin' to Chillicothe," was Boone's conclusion, "only they seemed, so far as we could make out, more likely to be Delawares."

"They were all in war paint," added Ree. "I know the Delawares, having lived near them for months. In fact I fancied I saw one or two warriors there I thought I knew, but I might have been mistaken."

“Well, if you didn’t get a deer, we got a b’ar all right.” This by one of the men, indicating Small, who with Quayle, was still on one side cutting up the bear. “Somebody had shot him just afore Jim saw him up at the cave.”

“Might have been some of that war party we saw,” was Boone’s conclusion. “Fact is, this whole durn country is so stirred up over beatin’ St. Clair that half of ’em think all they got to do to push back the paleface over the Ohio is to keep on killin’ of us wherever they find us, like they did with poor Nath Bush and his fambly.”

Further discussion was had while the party not only ate supper, but also cooked various portions of the bear for future use. Being young, it was in good condition, and its first wound had evidently been made within a day or so.

“I don’t feel that we are safe here even for one night,” said Boone. “What Ree says is about right. If he or we were caught by his former friends, our lives wouldn’t be wuth

buyin' at any price. How many of 'em did you count, Ree?"

"There was over a hundred, I am sure. It was pure luck they didn't see us. But Jason here left me to locate the lick while he scouted round. Off to the north he heard them chanting one of their war songs. He came back to me and we laid low. Mostly westward they were pointed, going single file, with a big fellow I felt I used to know in the lead. What *was* his name?" Ree tried to remember.

"Never mind his name, son," said Small. "Draw up, all on ye, and eat. That chap what hit him first might be back ag'in after his bear."

Thus in semi-serious mood, yet undershot by grave concern, the party passed an hour or so, during which supper was eaten, the rest of the meat packed away in their skin pouches with which all were provided, and a final decision reached as to what should be done. Boone as usual carried his plan, which was first to make for the old Indian town of Chillicothe where once Cornstalk ruled. Cornstalk was long dead,

but a chief that Boone knew ruled there over what 'was left of the Shawnee tribe. True, their predominance had dwindled; Chillicothe had declined in size and importance. Many of the tribesmen with their families had gone westward to be nearer the other more rebellious tribes, and also to be closer to their main source of paleface supplies, the British post at Detroit.

The moon rose and all except Boone, who seemed impervious to fatigue, lay down for a rest during the early hours of the night. At last they were called and under the Kentuckian's guidance changed their route somewhat so that their destination might be reached the following day.

The tramp, tramp, tramp through the lonely woods was monotonous, fatiguing, and seemingly interminable.

"We must not forgit what we came out for, men," more than once Boone emphasized to the others. "Remember what Wayne sent us out for? Wasn't it to git hold of all the pints we

could as to what these Ohio Injuns are up to? One thing I see clearly; and that is a lot of 'em are movin' west to j'ine the tribes that are gittin' together somewhar 'bout whar the Wabash River begins. I've been through that kentry. I was thar last year with St. Clair; and if he'd had the grit and the stick-to-it sperit that old Wayne has, we wouldn't 'a' got licked up thar."

In accordance with Jason's plans they reached the vicinity of the Indian town towards evening of the following day. Little does it look now as it did then. The Scioto River was there and the lay of the country was the same; but in the place of the open country, rolling prosperous farmlands, bustling villages, with railroads and highways all converging toward the modern city of Chillicothe, one saw only the unbroken range of forest, with here and there small, restricted areas of open river bottom land, either prairie or marsh.

Where the village stood were a few small patches of cleared land, devoted to corn, pump-

kins and such other products as the limited scope of aboriginal industry permitted.

“Well, well!” remarked Boone. “This here town ain’t what it was when I first seen it twenty or more years ago.”

CHAPTER XIII

AMONG THE SHAWNEES

The sight of half a dozen white men at first attracted only moderate attention, for all were garbed in rough frontier attire. Every trace of army discipline was carefully eliminated from any scouting or hunting parties from Wayne's forces that might happen to meet the Indians when on one of their forays into the redman's wilderness.

Still, suspicious glances could be noted here and there, especially when the party drew near to the council house. Entering without protest, except a kind of grimness on the faces of a few warriors nearby, they found that a conference of certain chiefs was just beginning.

"Where is Chief Ottawaha?" Boone asked of those near the entrance, speaking in the

Shawnee dialect as if it were his native tongue. Even Kingdom noted the change that affected those to whom the Kentuckian spoke. "He is my friend. I would see him now, if possible." The two groups, Indians and whites, regarded each other silently, as Boone continued:

"My friends here desire to become Ottawaha's friends also. Therefore we have come bent upon peace though we see around us many preparations for war."

"It is a bad time to talk peace," remarked one of the listeners, a man well advanced in years who had paused while entering the council-house to hear what the palefaces had to say, "but if the white men will follow, I will lead them to where our chief holds council with his warriors."

"You are one of his warriors?" asked Boone, and the other nodded. "You are not young. Do you remember a young Shawnee man, Taloosha by name, who was wounded in a fight with some Mingoes a few miles south of here, and who was left for dead, and was found by

a Kentucky hunter then on the way see Ottawaha here? It was when Cornstalk, the mighty Shawnee chief, was driving the pale-faces across the Ohio, and fought the good fight on the other side, which came to naught because too many of the redmen were too friendly with the now hated whites."

"Does a man remember that he was born?" The elderly warrior smiled, the first smile Boone had seen on a redman's face that day. "I am Taloosha, the friend of our big chief, who now rules where Cornstalk once ruled before. Long have I wanted to see that good paleface again."

"If you did see him, what would you do? Look at me closely. My name is Boone. I am a cousin of the great Daniel Boone, of whom most redmen have heard. Look at me again. Do you remember how he whom you once knew carried you on his back; how many times we stopped to rest, and when you were weak and pain weary, who was it that killed a spotted fawn on our route and fed you with the broth

down yonder?" pointing southward along the Scioto murmuring on its way. "Do you remember how at last we met some of your people and they helped to carry you to your lodge here?"

During this talk, mostly unintelligible to the other whites, the redman's face underwent varied changes, from growing wonder and gradual comprehension to joyous surprise and acknowledgment as at last he seized Boone's hand and wrung it heartily.

"Wagh—wagh!" he exclaimed. "I know you now! That," he pointed at an old battle scar on the Kentuckian's face, "that helps me. Then it was fresh."

"It was. Mingoes made it down on the Ohio. And you are my friend Taloosha! Well, well! Wonders will never cease, will they?"

"The wonder is mine that I did not recognize my brother before. But you have come at a bad time, you and your friends. All the tribes are up in arms and hastening north to join Little Turtle and his warriors who

fought against the paleface St. Clair and won. We hear there is another army of your race to come again. Its chief is one they call Mad Anthony Wayne. Truly he must be mad if he thinks the redmen will submit to be driven from the lands of their fathers like dumb beasts of the fields.”

A grunt of agreement ran round the semicircle of Indians. Their faces grew stern again, and Boone once more urged his friend in an undertone to take them where Chief Ottawaha was still conferring with a circle of what seemed to be leading warriors of neighboring districts.

Extricating themselves as easily as possible, the whites followed Boone who in turn followed Taloosha. The latter, while still friendly with the Kentuckian, had seemed all at once to grow cool towards the others. Kingdom carefully noted the increasing hostility among those who were near, but still hoped for the best. So old a man as Jason would hardly have come here without feeling sure of a peaceful recep-

tion. Besides, if there were increasing hostility and the tribes were generally on the warpath, there was no place where the real situation would be more accurately measured than here.

“Boy,” whispered Small to Ree, “I don’t more’n half like the looks of things. ’Twould take but mighty little to set this whole durn outfit agin us, hey?”

“Mebbe so,” whispered Kingdom. “Taloosha seems friendly—with Boone. But the rest of them look glum enough.”

While they were thus speaking apart, Taloosha was making Boone known to an imposing looking chief, who regarded him frowningly at first, but presently he shook hands and motioned Boone to be seated with his friend, the warrior whom the paleface had once saved from death.

The others were apparently left to their own devices, and moved awkwardly about, as if sensible of the intentional neglect. While so doing, Kingdom’s sharp eyes detected amid another party of redskins entering the council

house one or two faces that aroused a feeling that he had seen them before. He nudged Jason and, stooping down, whispered in his ear:

“Watch those Indians now entering, Jason. Watch 'em close! Haven't we seen one or more of 'em before? I—”

Here Boone, taking a swift, sly, scrutinizing look, suddenly jumped to his feet. He too had recognized faces there as among those whom they had fought and bested at the destroyed home of Nath Bush. The others of the party, while astonished at Boone's actions, gave no heed as to the cause. Probably they did not notice the peculiar war paint these new arrivals wore.

“See that chap with the black circle on each cheek?” Ree further said. “I remember giving him a punch when we were mixed up at the spring-house. See! He hasn't washed his face since.”

“Right you are, boy!” This in another whisper from Boone, for their two heads were close as Boone sprang up. “Don't say a word more.

Leave me to do the talkin' that's bound to come. Whisper to Jim and the rest. Our lives may depend on what happens here in the next few minutes."

Then he turned and spoke soothingly to Taloosha, who wondered that Boone had risen up so suddenly. Meanwhile the new arrivals had begun to make their way through the lodge towards the circle of warriors, their eyes scanning the palefaces standing behind Ottawaha.

Suddenly one of the approaching group pointed straight at Return Kingdom, at the same time whispering in low gutturals to the leader, who nodded after another malevolent glance at the whites gathered behind Chief Ottawaha. By this time Small and the other palefaces began to see that things were not going the way Boone had indicated when planning to come here. Taloosha himself, though still friendly with Boone, had drawn somewhat nearer to Chief Ottawaha and the leading warriors gathered about their chief.

All at once the leader of the party strode

boldly forward, crossing straight towards the chief. As he went his eyes swept the paleface group. Then he addressed the chief, his words being in the dialect mostly understood by the leaders among the Mid-west tribes when conferring together, a sort of Indian polyglot of terms, generally comprehended by all concerned.

“You have sent for us and we are here,” said the spokesman for the new arrivals. “From the shores of the lake of the Big Waters we have come. Why is it that we find here the palefaces who slew some of our young men back on the waters of Muskingum? Behold the scalps we bring!”

And he had the audacity to lay before the war council several fresh paleface scalps—nothing more nor less than those of the Bush family, as Boone at once recognized. Ottawaha, ignoring the blood-stained trophies, waved a patronizing arm to the row of logs to his right and opposite the place where the whites were gathered with Boone and Taloosha.

“Our friends the Mingoes from the Big Lake are welcome,” was Ottawaha’s response. “My young men are gathering, and together we will push on to where our brothers up north are assembling. Our chiefs have the eyes of eagles. But even the eagle may overlook the small snake that the hawk will see and either kill or avoid. Whence come these war trophies?” pointing at the scalps. “Were they taken in open war? Or was it by stealth, in the night, when peaceful palefaces that fight not but till the soil were surprised by warriors on the war-path?”

“It is enough,” said the Mingo spokesman. “We were on our way to join all of the race who are defending our own lands from the intruding palefaces. We were close to the army the paleface Mad Anthony is gathering to destroy us. We killed the palefaces who were devastating our forests, cutting down trees that corn might grow. Many others are there doing likewise. We attacked and slew them, and we bring these trophies as witnesses that we are

sincere in our fight against the palefaces who are always driving us back mile by mile.

“But after we had gone from there we struck the trail of armed palefaces who had camped there. They saw us first, and they fought. But we drove them back until in turn we were overtaken by more palefaces and we had to retreat to where our main body lay. That is not all. We have lost some of our young men. And we see here in council with our friends the Shawnees some of the wicked palefaces who killed our young men back there. Therefore we ask you, O Ottawaha; you who stand where the great Cornstalk ruled, if you are a friend to us who have come many miles to join you in our war, or if you are a friend to these.” He was pointing now straight at Boone, Kingdom and the rest of the group of whites.

He continued to point, while the group of Mingoes glared at the palefaces as if awaiting some response. But before any reply came from Ottawaha, there rose up a savage shout

that threatened to develop into the traditional war whoop, which indicates war, bloodshed and destruction. The Mingoes joining in with the now excited Shawnees, for a full minute the big council-house echoed to these blood-curdling sounds.

“Keep together, men!” urged Boone to his followers. “Now’s the time to make or break us. Keep quiet, don’t flinch, but not a move until I give the word!”

Jason wheeled and seizing Taloosha by the arm, he urged, while the roar was still rising in demoniacal fury:

“Are you a friend of the friend who bore you from death to safety? Speak!”

Taloosha looked more and more undecided. Personally he wished well to the man who had borne him on his back and probably saved his life. But what could Taloosha do—now? In an instant Jason saw indecision written in the man’s face and felt him cringe as he gripped the warrior’s arm. With a gesture of contempt

Boone released Taloosha, turned to Ottawaha and as the whooping died down, the Kentuckian spoke; spoke loudly, too:

“The great chief of the Shawnees knows well that I am his friend. He has heard the name of Boone. Who has not? The Boones have always been firm friends and ready foes. We came here to see what troubles the sons of Cornstalk, who fought us manfully many years ago. We did not come in enmity. We were sent out to find what troubles the redmen so. There is plenty of land for all to dwell in peace side by side. I appeal to you, though, if we did not do right to attack and punish those from the Big Lake who had killed my friends: friends who had often given me shelter. That was the reason we fought them. They had slain and scalped our friends and were following us. We were outnumbered. Nor did more pale-faces come. One of us,” here he pointed at Kingdom and glared defiance at the Mingoes opposite, “hardly more than a boy, attacked them from behind and they ran away. That

was all there was to it, O Ottawaha. All we desire now is that we be permitted to go on our way unmolested. If we are followed, we will know it. But we rely on you; on your honor as a great and a fair-minded Chief."

This speech, delivered with unlooked-for force and eloquence, while it was as so much Greek to the rest of the whites, certainly had much effect not only upon Ottawaha but on many others among the Shawnees.

"My brother has spoken well," responded the Shawnee chief. "He has come here in peace. He shall go from here in peace. We know of the Boones; they are great paleface warriors. We also know of the Boone that bore our brother," waving a hand at Taloosha who again stood close to Jason, "that was sore wounded, to safety. The Shawnees do not forget such things. Taloosha will take these paleface friends of ours to his own lodge. He will feed them and send them on their way.

"But this is no time for the paleface to visit our villages. There has been bitter war; there

will be more war. All the tribes are moving to join those who under Little Turtle and other chiefs will yet strive to drive the palefaces back where they belong—east of the Ohio River. That is where they must go and there they must stay. I have spoken.”

He sat down, and Taloosha, reaching over, shook hands with him. Then Ottawaha shook hands warmly with Boone, though less cordially with Small, Kingdom and the others. Meantime on the opposite side of the circle the Mingoes, together with certain Shawnees, continued to glare at the whites with no very friendly gestures and grunts. Taloosha, rising, motioned for Boone and the others to follow, which they did silently.

Once at his lodge, the warrior made the squaws bestir themselves and soon they were eating heartily, while the cooking went on until the whole party were supplied with sufficient cold food to keep them for a few days.

Then a commotion outside arose. Taloosha,

accompanied by Boone, went out, the latter saying to his party:

“You’ll have to wait here a bit until we find out what, if anything, is up. If these dratted Mingoes hadn’t butted in, we’d have had no trouble in finding out just what we wanted as to the Injuns right round here. In fact, I ain’t certain but what we’d better take the back track anyhow, once we get away from here. Things look squally, and the wust on it is, it’s general ’mongst ’em all. Lay low now! Don’t budge till I gets back!”

But hardly had the two gotten outside than they saw various groups of both Mingoes and Shawnees slipping along among the various lodges, evidently intending to surround the locality where the whites were.

“Look here, Taloosha,” said Jason, instantly making up his mind. “You stay right here before your lodge. They’ll hardly break in ’fore I fetch the Chief. Don’t you leave here ’til I get back!”

Without another word Jason, his rifle on his arm, finger at the trigger, strode directly towards the council lodge, casting at the same time frowning looks at the Mingoes skulking, sidling, avoiding open contact with the Kentuckian, and so finally reaching the big lodge. Inside he went towards the circle of head men and at once addressed Ottawaha, who looked up in surprise.

“Chief of the Shawnees,” began Jason, “are you the real chief here? Is your word always to be obeyed here? I ask because those Mingoes and certain of your unruly young men are at this moment trying to surround Taloosha’s lodge where we were quietly eating. Is that the way you treat your friends? We are either friends or foes. You said we were friends. But the actions of your young men, neither here nor out there,” pointing outwards, “are those of friends.”

“My brother Boone is too easily alarmed,” replied Ottawaha. “I will go back with you. It shall not be said that the man who saved

the life of Taloosha should meet with treachery in Taloosha's home. Follow me! Come, brothers!" meaning those who were with him in council, "let us see if I am being obeyed."

So saying, the chief led the way from the council lodge, out and down to where Taloosha was still standing guard before his own wigwam. No sight was to be now had of the skulking Mingoes or their Shawnee friends.

"Where are they, Taloosha?" demanded Jason, while the chief and the older warriors smiled incredulously. "Have they gone back?"

Taloosha explained that the skulkers seemed to have disappeared amid the various lodges thickly scattered about that section of the big village. He did not know where they had gone. At this juncture Kingdom appeared and whispered in Jason's ear:

"I could not help watching. So I sneaked out under the rear wall. Those chaps haven't dispersed. They're in hiding somewhere. I saw a bunch crawl under a lodge down near the edge of the woods yonder."

“Say, boy, you sure of this?” Boone’s face was hardening. “Tell what you saw to the Chief. Tell it straight out.”

In the mongrel tongue then in vogue between whites and reds, Kingdom repeated what he had told Boone, adding the conviction that these Mingoes had so infected a portion of the Shawnees that while ostensibly obeying Ottawaha’s orders, they undoubtedly would try to entrap the whites in an ambushade, if possible, outside the town.

“It is enough,” returned the Chief. “I think my brother is unduly alarmed. But we do not want the blood of Boone’s friends on our hands. Some of us will go with you. We will cross the river. But take warning. It is not safe now for any paleface in the redman’s country. Go back to your own color. Keep away from us and we will keep our hands from you. But when the paleface Wayne comes, then all palefaces are our enemies. I have spoken.”

“Perhaps you have, Chief,” replied Boone. “Now I will speak. We don’t want you to go

with us to the woods. We will go alone. We have been fed; we have enough to eat with us. If your young men and the Mingoes follow us, then let them also look out. If blood is shed, it will not be ours alone. I too have spoken."

Without offering his hand either to Ottawaha or Taloosha, Boone pushed aside the skin door of the lodge, and called out:

"Come out, lads! We've got to face it and we might as well face things boldly. I 'lowed our red friends would make them Mingoes and their own young men keep their hands off. But we'll go anyhow. Come on!"

And out the party came, turned towards the river and, entering one of several big canoes drawn up on shore, proceeded to paddle not across, but up stream, with Jason at the steering paddle. From what Ree had further seen, it was evident that the skulking savages who at first had followed, were mostly intent upon reaching the river to the south edge of the town, doubtless thinking that as their leader was a

Kentuckian, they would turn down towards the Ohio.

The gathered Shawnees watched them in silence, while Taloosha intimated to Boone that they were welcome to any of the canoes.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SURPRISE ATTACK

Paddling up stream was not easy or very rapid. But all were skilled in that art, practically the only mode of water navigation common among both palefaces and the redmen. Gradually the river bend hid from them the town and its surrounding clearings and the forest rose up solemnly on either side.

The westering sun shone through the branches, and a nipping air—the foretaste of a frosty night—made all aware that the winter was not yet over by any means. A few miles further on Jason steered the canoe towards the narrow mouth of a winding tributary to the east, where low, shelving bluffs lined the small water course. Said Jason:

“There used to be some small caves hereabouts. I ’lowed we might camp here for the

night, and then decide what we better do next. It's my notion as we better send two of our party back to Wayne's camp to let 'em know jest about how things are down this way. As fer me, I want to go further west and do a little more spyin' out."

Some discussion ensued as they paddled leisurely up the narrow water course. The right cave was found with a readiness that caused Boone to explain that he had been out here before, with a hunting party, and that they had camped about here for a week or more.

"Shawnees were all friendly then," continued Jason. "Anything we did was all right. Some of their warriors went with us and showed us these caves. When we went back down the Scioto they kept 'long with us until we crossed into Kaintuck."

Night came, and after supper the party discussed matters easily. All at once Kingdom and Small, who had been taking a short circuit round their camping place, came in and reported that all seemed quiet. Nevertheless Boone sat

up on guard, determined to put no trust in the savages. Far along in the night there rose a yell, and almost before Jason could spring up and level his rifle, a score of painted savages burst through the undergrowth. Boone fired at them from the mouth of the cave, bringing down the man at whom he aimed.

At the same time he kicked the nearest form among the sleepers. It happened to be Ree, who sprang to his feet and rushed to Boone's side, while the others, snatching up their weapons, also made for the cave mouth. The woods were alive with roaring savages, now so smeared with war paint as to be individually unrecognizable. After desultory shooting on either side the enemy made a rush, as they far outnumbered the whites and had the advantage of concealment from the thick growth of bushes that grew almost up to the campfire, now down to a few glowing embers.

In a trice the combat became intense, close, and, in the darkness, almost invisible. Kingdom, singling out the savage who seemed to be

foremost, closed with him, and the two came to the ground side by side. Both were unseen by the other whites.

“Back to the cave, men!” called Boone.
“They’re too many for us out here.”

This warning was obeyed by all except Ree, who was still doing his best to throttle his antagonist. From the cave mouth, part of the defenders fired fairly into the body of savages; then, retiring to load, gave room for the others to do likewise. All the time the whoops and yells outside were incessant.

“Those be Mingo yells if I’m any jedge,” grunted Boone, now seeing that the foe would be unable to storm the cave. “We’d orter staid back here from the fust. Where be ye, Ree Kingdom?”

Amid the confusion of noises no reply was given, nor was it likely that any would be made. Before this, two Indian warriors had come to their comrade’s assistance, and Ree would have died then and there but for one thing.

“Do not kill the paleface dog!” said the voice of him who had first closed with the lad. “I know him. I knew him to-day at the council lodge. It is White Fox, one of two spies that lived near Chief Hopocon’s village. I know him. Drag him back!” Here a blow from the butt end of a rifle knocked the boy senseless. He fell and was dragged off by his captors into the obscurity of the forest.

Meantime, having left three of their number before the mouth of the cave, and seeing no chance of the defenders being overcome while their ammunition lasted, the savages withdrew, still dragging with them their one victim.

Hardly a moment passed before nothing was visible outside the cave-mouth but the flare of the dying fire and the bodies of three savages whom Boone, surveying from the cavern pronounced to be Mingoes; that is, he qualified:

“All ’ceptin’ one. I can’t ’zactly make him out. Wait till it’s safe to show ourselves. Where’s Ree Kingdom?”

“Why, I ’lowed you knew,” said Small. “I

seed him jumped on by one on 'em when we first got mixed up. They was layin' thar and I saw Ree, as I thought, gittin' on top of t'other. Then I had so much to do to hold my own, with them a comin' on, that I never seed him no more. 'Bout that time they all come a rushin'. Ef we hadn't 'a' took turn and turn about loadin' and firin' I guess they'd 'a' got in among us. Must 'a' been two dozen on 'em at least."

But with a growing sense of concern, Boone was already questioning the others, who could give but little additional information. One man said he saw one of the foe strike at some one or something which two of the enemy were dragging off, but the struggle was so confusing for the few minutes it lasted that he was not certain what or who it was.

"My good Gawd!" exclaimed Jason, looking round with unusual concern. "If I'd had any idee, I'd 'a' clubbed my gun and gone out among 'em myself!"

To bear this statement out he reloaded his rifle, and waiting no longer crawled forth, peer-

ing on every side. Plunging through the bushes with a lighted flare he had picked up from the fire, he made a thorough search amid the undergrowth but at first found nothing. At last, down by the water's edge, where their own canoe should still have been but was not, he picked up two articles that further examination told him were Kingdom's. One was a fur cap he had seen Ree wear daily. The other was a rifle, which also he knew must have been Kingdom's. Not only was their canoe gone, but there were plain signs where the prow of another smaller canoe had been drawn up. Both were gone.

By this time the others were out probing around here and there. One found a moccasin that Small swore was Kingdom's.

"I orter know. Me and him traded t'other day. Mine was too small; his just fitted me and mine him. I know this one of mine for, in making 'em, I used a kind of stitch that's my own invention. See thar?"

"Well, he must 'a' been alive, or they'd 'a'

never drug him off that way," was Boone's conclusion. "I'm mighty sorry, for I liked that boy. Ef he is alive, them Mingoes'll take him somewhere's and most like torture him to death."

Further examination of the dead informed them that two were undoubtedly Mingoes while the third was a Delaware. Said Boone: "It shows how mixed up the hull durn mess of red tribes be now. They have their private diffrunces; but now, when it comes to makin' a stand ag'in the whites, they're all like one. Mebbe Wayne's right in drillin' and drillin' like he does. It'll sure be a fight to a finish whenever it does come off."

Further examination disclosed to Quayle and Boone that the dead Delaware must have come from Hopocon's village. What was to be done next? With their big canoe gone, further river travel was impossible.

"Them reds," said Quayle, "must 'a' come straight from the Injun village. Wonder ef old Ottawaha could have knowed it?"

“Don’t make much diffrence anyhow,” was Boone’s opinion. “They’re all ag’in us whites now. We’ll move on ’arly in the mornin’. We orter make the Trace that runs east from the Wabash kentry by to-morrer night. Then two on ye’ll have to hike back and tell Wayne jest what’s goin’ on.”

Not feeling it safe to remain longer at the place where they had been attacked, after devoting some further time to a search of the immediate neighborhood for any signs of the defeated enemy, the party along towards morning crossed the creek and started northward. Boone acted as the guide, he having ranged this whole region in the old days when the tribes were generally friendly. Two miles further on there was a halt at Boone’s suggestion, when he said:

“I’m goin’ to do a little spyin’ on my own hook. I want you all to stay here ’til I gets back. That is, some on ye can hunt, for we’ll need all the meat we can carry, not knowin’ jest when or how we’ll be able to stop and kill

more for we've got to be on the move faster'n ever. But don't go far, and leave some one in camp if ye do go."

With a few more words, cautioning them to keep a sharp lookout lest the defeated party happen to return, Boone, with his rifle ready, set out on the back track, evidently bent on finding out how things were going on in the Indian town they had so recently left. The others, leaving two men in camp, devoted their time to hunting. Game being plentiful thereabouts, and to an extent almost unbelievable to modern mid-west conceptions, they managed to secure not only two fat deer, but also a wild turkey or two, with other smaller game.

Night came. They broiled and fried. They cut slender strips of venison, hanging them on a framework over coals from the fire, in order that the meat would keep for a day or two while rapid traveling was being done.

At last, when all were growing sleepy and the owls were hooting their midnight warnings,

Boone stalked out of the surrounding shadows and sat quietly down among them.

“Well,” began Sergeant Quayle, “what did ye see, hear, or s’pishun, anyhow? We heerd ye comin’ and I sez, ‘Lay low, b’ys. Hit’s Jase, all right.’ ”

“You hear!” jeered Boone. “Why, ef I’d wanted to I could ’a’ picked the life outen ary one on ye. Yes, if I’d wanted to! That is, s’posin’ I was a Mingo.”

A laugh that might have been on either or both followed this. Boone lit his pipe and explained that so far as he had found out, the whole town was in confusion. Warriors were leaving continually. Ottawaha himself had started for some place to the west, probably some gathering-place near the Miami River. Two parties had come in, each bearing paleface scalps, for Jason had seen them. Even Talloosha, his friend, whom he had managed to see, had told Boone that he himself was on the verge of setting out the following day. Any

and every white man in all that southwest section of what is now the state of Ohio was in danger unless he removed himself, his women and children at once.

“D’ye know one thing?” he continued. “It ain’t safe anywhars for the paleface except among his own kind. Ef I was to tell you the times I had slippin’ and slidin’ in and out ’thout gittin’ caught, ye’d laugh. Even as ’twas, thar was several got wise that I was snoopin’ round. But luckily they was Injuns I knowed or as knowed of me.”

“Sure they didn’t go back on ye?” queried Quayle uneasily. “Injuns be powerful treacherous cattle once they git something in the air to sniff at. See or hear anything ’bout our young friend, Ree? Game boy, that kid!”

“Nothin’ to amount to much. That party never came back. It was mostly Mingoes, with a few of them Shawnee youngbloods as want to fight anywhere and all the time. Of Delawares I heard nothin’ ’cept that two or three was with

the Mingoes, one of 'em I guess bein' the feller we found dead after the fight."

"Where have they gone, then?" asked Small.

"Course they took Ree along; that is, ef they didn't kill him on the way."

"Sorry, but nary thing could I find out 'bout that boy. I'm 'feared; but then he might pull through. That boy had real grit."

While all were sorry, all felt that there was nothing to be done but to continue their tramp for the great north Trace, and from there either go on home or, as Boone had at first said, send word to Wayne by two of their number, and proceed further as circumstances directed in their main effort to learn what could be learned as to the enemy's force and its ultimate destination.

As the night was quiet and Boone was thoroughly tired out, and, moreover, the meat needed further drying, it was decided to sleep there until daylight, then pursue their journey to the northward.

So, wrapped up in the few blankets they had, they snuggled around the fire, with one of the party always on duty as picket, to be relieved every hour, the time to be measured by the course of the stars then visible. And so the night wore on until dawn, when all were roused, ate a hasty early breakfast and again took the river trail leading towards the old aboriginal Trace or highway, that had been for many years the main route of old-time Indian travel 'twixt east and west north of the Ohio River.

Nothing of importance happened during this three-day tramp. Towards the night of the third day Boone, who was somewhat ahead of the party, as was his wont when on the march through hostile country, saw faint indications of smoke in the distance. He halted until the others came up, and explained that the trail they had been journeying towards was now almost at hand.

“Thar’s some one or something thar. It might be only a fire that’s spread from some camp as is now deserted. Or it might be In-

juns. Ef it be Injuns we got to watch out. No use to let 'em know who, what or whar we be."

There being no disagreement among them as to this, Jason briefly deployed the party over a space that covered several hundred yards, yet so arranged that each one was within easy touch and hearing of his neighbor. Boone himself took the center, but kept slightly in advance. He had figured that they were hardly a mile from the source of that feathery spiral of smoke. Then came his parting injunction: "Whatever ye see or do, don't make your presence known onless ye can't help it. Ef it's a war party or sech-like, sneak back to the others best way ye can after letting the feller next ye know what's up. No noise; keep still, and, in a pinch, 'member that perhaps ye hold the lives of all on us in the outcome of what ye do."

Thus admonished, the party went on with increasing caution as they drew gradually nearer to the tenuous, slender wisps of smoke that rose up through and above the dense woodlands in front. Boone, well ahead, reached the east and

west trail. Still the smoke, though nearer, was somewhere out of sight. The evening was still and some fancied they could hear the crackle of burning wood and smell the odors of fire in the air.

The trail itself—a mere primitive blazing of trees originally, had been so long and so often used as the one sure path through this as yet unspanned wilderness—betrayed nothing out of the usual beyond the irregular procession of moccasin tracks that were always more or less manifest there. To be sure most of these tracks ran from east to west. Hardly any indicated a contrary course. Many were blurred by the weather, the rain, or half obliterated by later tracks. Yet they showed plainly that the savages of eastern and middle Ohio were making for the west in numbers most unusual, to say the least.

The party had converged until all were gathered together near Boone. With a wave of his arm to keep the others slightly back they crossed the Trace, edging here more to the northeast,

and broke through the undergrowth quietly, more alert than ever, yet impatient for what was next to be seen.

Just then the unforeseen thing happened; happened without warning. One of the party, a rather clumsy private when back in the Legion, stumbled in some way while crossing a mossy slough on a half decayed log. In the effort to save himself from a bad fall he caught at the branches of a big beech. His gun slipped from his hand and struck a rock, the jar springing the hair trigger, and a loud explosion shook the air.

Instantly came a shrill war-whoop from a short distance ahead, and Boone felt the uselessness of further secrecy or an attempted surprise. Waving his arm Jason called back to his men:

“Foller me! Thar’s only a few of ’em, friend or foe!”

CHAPTER XV

TWO SURPRISES

The hunter dashed forward, followed eagerly by the rest, each holding his rifle for instant use, knowing also that his pistols were loaded and at his belt. Even the man whose exploding gun had caused this sudden change held it in one hand, brandishing a pistol in the other.

Yells were heard as the intervening trees permitted kaleidoscopic views of a neglected camp-fire and half a score of savages scurrying to and fro hunting their weapons. Also another sight, more sinister, somber, yet enraging to the men thus advancing.

It was that of a boy, evidently white, for though the upper portion of his body was smeared with the black death-paint, the flesh above his leggings gleamed white. His head

drooped low; his arms, drawn tightly back, were bound behind him at the wrists about a good-sized tree, before which, some distance away, were the half flaming embers of the fire. Deep in the wood of the tree hung two hatchets, evidently just flung by the tormentors, one on either side of the boy's head. At the sounds of the yells he jerked his head up weakly and started to glare defiance at his foes. But what he then saw was the foremost of the approaching party of whites, who at once began shooting.

Taken at sudden disadvantage the Indians began firing. But being on the run their shots were ineffective. One savage, in the war paint of the Delawares, wheeled at the edge of the forest and aimed straight at the captive. But before he could pull the trigger there came the sharp, nearer crack of Boone's rifle, mingling with reports from the guns of the other whites. The Delaware crumpled up, his gun going off as he fell, its bullet harmlessly hitting the earth. Three others fell in that first discharge.

“After them skunks what’s left, boys!” called Boone. “Git ’em all if ye can!”

And he hurried to the bound captive, his knife out, and cut away his bonds before he thought to look into his face.

“Jase—I—I’m all in—” And the captive toppled over into the hunter’s ready arms.

“Durn me if hit ain’t our blame little White Fox! Ain’t that what these skunks called ye? Hold yer head up. Drink a swaller of this.”

In those days the prohibition question was far from being imagined, let alone known. A swallow or two of the contents of the small flask which most Kentuckians then carried as snake bite “medicine,” at first half strangled, then revived the boy. He sat up, leaning against the “torture” tree, and tried to shake Jason’s hand. But the latter, knowing that his comrades were still making things hot for the fleeing Indians, picked up Ree Kingdom, carried him to the fire, and placed him on blankets recently occupied by some of the savages.

“Ef this ain’t a piece of good luck, my name

ain't Boone! Chirk up, boy! You'll be all right in a minute; all but clothes."

Further shots were heard at longer intervals. All sounds of flight, pursuit and combat dwindled, and presently the whites began to straggle back. From the belts of one or two dangled fresh hair trophies. Without waiting for aught else, those who had shot fatally in the first onset proceeded to relieve their legitimate victims of their scalps, leaving only one, the Delaware whom Boone's rifle had felled. Small paused over this one, calling out:

"Hey, Jason, you be busy? Shall I lift this one's ha'r?"

"Don't care what you do. Know whom we've got here? It's our lost boy!"

And Jason, totally oblivious as to whether or not he secured his dead enemy's scalp, raised Ree to his feet. The boy's face and body were already washed reasonably clean, so that the others might see and understand.

"Why, lad, Oi'm that pl'azed O'id shout; but Oi've been runnin' so me breath's gone com-

plately. Sure we're that glad to see ye back, wheriver ye've been, that we'll cook ye a good supper in no toime!"

Thus spoke Sergeant Quayle, running up to shake hands, and the others followed suit in such order as their hair lifting operations permitted. This may sound rather barbarous, but in those frontier days of struggle in the wilderness, enemy scalps were prized by all or nearly all the whites, while to the redmen the scalp was a symbol of victory and therefore prized accordingly.

It was not long now before Ree was sitting up, a blanket round his shoulders, while the others made haste to ransack the camp for his clothing, part of which was found among the savages' effects. Others of his comrades parted with some of their own so that presently Ree was in pretty good shape, so far as garments, ammunition, and sundry personal belongings went.

"All ye need now is the gun," remarked Boone. "Wait a minute."

He walked directly to the dead Delaware and picked up the fellow's rifle, regarding it gingerly. Finally he took it, together with such ammunition as the fellow had in his pouch and came back, adding: "It's a British gun; not a bad one, either. Your own somehow got lost that night ye was taken. Some one found it, I think, but in the general mix-up we lost it ag'in. And now, lad, tell us what them devils did with ye, and how ye come to, looped up to yon tree, with them crazy loons practicin' on yer narves with their tomahawks—cuss 'em!"

Kingdom, now quite himself, was examining his gun. It and others left by the dead savages had plainly come from Detroit. They were extraordinarily good guns, and were kept by the rest in view of possible future need. With knife, hatchet, pistols, together with powder-horn, bullet pouch, and other minor accoutrements, the boy felt that he again stood on an equal footing with his comrades. He looked at his comrades cheerfully as he began:

"There ain't much to tell. They dragged me

off between two of their number, much as Jerome was dragged about by the Delawares. For some reason they were pretty savage with me. They had lost several of their men in that fight where they got me. I was getting the best of that big chap that jumped me in front of the cave, when some one clubbed me with his gun butt. After that I didn't know much until the party arrived back in the edge of the Indian town.

“Here I was kept closely guarded, nor would they permit any one in the hut where I was except their own party and some other younger Shawnees that looked as if they'd like to eat me alive. They didn't give me much to eat either, and my guards were simply brutal, being both Mingoos. One of the Delawares I used to see in Chief Hopocon's village told me I'd soon see all the whites west of the Big River either dead or in my fix. It seemed so absurd I couldn't help laughing. At that he struck me. I drew back and let him have it with my fist. Then a number of 'em beat me up, so that

I could hardly walk when they took me away in the night. But I kept up by sheer grit, I reckon. What's the use of knuckling down when it only brings you more abuse and ill-treatment?

"They left that town in the night. I know it was so done, in order that they might get clear away, then have their own fun with me and nobody else be the wiser. That was two days after the fight. We got into a big canoe and started up the Scioto. At least I think it was the Scioto, for they kept me blinded most of the time. At last they landed, hid the canoe in a big hollow log, and set out north. I knew it was north by seeing the north star."

"Funny we didn't strike your trail somewhere!" This from Boone, following the lad's story with interest. "Were you on the east side of the river?"

"No, I don't think we were; at least for a time. They were arguing as to where they were going next. Those Mingoes wanted to make for one of their villages off somewhere

west, but not far. Others wanted to strike the Big Trace more east. Anyhow, when we left the canoe I am sure we were on the west side, though one tied as I was all the time could see but little through the bushes. On they went fast as possible, crossed the Trace and went on further. Then I happened to stumble once too often to suit their convenience. They cuffed me about. I was near worn out. Finally one of the Delawares advocated that they have some fun with me before I was taken to the Mingo village.

“I knew what such fun would mean to me if it was carried out by that bunch. On the heels of that they killed three fat deer, and a halt was made right here, where you see there is a good spring of water. Well, they cooked and ate and smoked, and two more Mingoes happened by, or were encountered somehow. These had a jug of firewater. After that they all got pretty tipsy; laughed and fussed among themselves, though I couldn't make out what it was about, except that they pointed at me now

and then. Meantime, though unbound, I felt more and more uneasy. My guards finally joined the others, took more drinks of firewater, and finally seemed to busy themselves picking out a tree nearby, while others, whooping drunkenly, began to sharpen knives and hatchets.

“I knew something was up, and that the something had to do with me. I took just about two seconds to make up my mind. There was a stump betwixt me and the biggest bunch of Indians. My legs were free and my hands loosely tied and, as luck would have it, one of them pirates had left a knife sticking in a log where he had been whetting it. I grabbed the knife, pressed my knee against the handle to keep it straight, then sawed my wrist withes until they were about in two. One of 'em saw me. I guess most of 'em thought I still had a guard. When they started towards me I jumped up, forgetting the knife, but finally jerked my wrists apart. Then I started to run, the whole drunken bunch after me, and me with only a mighty few yards' start. I reckon I

might have got away then, but I was too stiff and too weak after what I'd undergone the last two days."

"And ye couldn't make it, of coorse?" interpolated Quayle sympathetically.

"No, Sergeant, I couldn't. They caught me before I had run, or rather limped fifty yards. After that it was all up. They beat, cuffed and kicked me until they were tired of that. They then tied me to that tree. I expected torture—probably by burning. But some of the young ones wanted to try their skill with tomahawks. I 'lowed, in their drunken state, that a merciful misthrow by some one overtrying to play his part would settle me for good and all without the torture by fire. They had just begun before you all appeared. Two only had thrown. The first one sent his hatchet half a foot away from my head. I felt a thrill of dread and fear. You know they try to see how near they can come to hitting you without actually making a hit. If they can gouge a piece of skin off without doing further life damage, it is a great

success. The second almost clipped my ear. At that I felt faint and my head drooped. All the yells and other noise I hardly remember hearing. When I came to, Jason, here, was holding me up trying to get me to swallow a little liquor. It almost strangled me but I guess it did me good. Anyhow, I felt stronger all at once."

"And I reckon ye needed a strength'ner ef I'm any jedge. But now, boys, what'd we better do next? I want to know what ye all thinks. Them snakes as run off'll spread the news rapid."

A short debate followed. One or two were for pushing forward westward, taking in the aforementioned Mingo village, evidently one of those scattered settlements of that widely scattered tribe. Others wanted to return to the Legion. They had already found out better concerning the growing unrest of the tribes in southwestern Ohio and beyond. Was not even Chillicothe, hitherto a strong neutral point among the Indian towns, already sending out

her young men to reënforce the warriors along the Wabash and at the headwaters of the Maumee? Jason blinked non-committally as he listened.

Finally Kingdom put in a qualifying word as follows:

“I’m rather young to be butting in, perhaps. But General Wayne sent us out to find out what we could. Well, so far as I can see we know pretty well what is up without going any further. If we continue further west, the chances are that the savages will hold us up. They’ll either overpower us all or, if some of us get away, the others will either be dead or prisoners. If you don’t know what being prisoner is, I do. It isn’t nice at all. Do you think we really could find out anything more that Wayne really wants to know than we already know now? I doubt it—”

Here Boone brought one large hand heartily down on Ree’s shoulder as the Kentuckian grinned broadly. Then he looked at the rest, saying:

“This lad’s got a older head on his shoulders than I ’lowed. We already know the hull durn kentry is stirred up to full war pitch, from the Muskingum clean to the Wabash. British weepsons and ball and powder everywhar. Why, dang it! Haven’t we’uns got ’em right here?” He patted one of the captured guns and pointed to the powder horns just replenished with British powder. “Think what ye like, boys, but I’m with Kingdom here. Let’s make back tracks fast as we kin. I bet thar’s enough reds ’twixt here and Wayne’s people to extarminate us ef they was able. Didn’t they try it on ’way back at the Bush place? Like to ’a’ got us, too, jest when we’d started out. I bet if we went back to that Injun town to-day, we’d be held pris’ner; that is, ef we didn’t beat it in a hurry.”

At this juncture one of the party who had been detailed to follow the fleeing Mingoes and then scout around the nearby woods, was seen emerging from the timber, on the run towards their temporary halting place, as if something

imminent were giving new impetus to his movements. He waved his arms, saying:

“Grab your guns, men! Off towards the east, where I went furthest, I heard signs of firing, and I’m almost sartin I heard the war whoop.” The fellow, a sturdy Virginian from near Fort Pitt, was wildly excited.

“Jest ca’m yerself, Eb,” easily replied Boone, though he, like the others, picked up his gun, shaking up the priming a little. “What was it and whar was it? Off yander?” Jason pointed east.

“Yes, ’twas off thar, right whar the trail runs, I reckon. But I was a good mile off. It seemed like it might be comin’ this way—listen!”

All listened for a moment. The older men seemingly heard nothing unusual, but one or two, Ree among them, undoubtedly did hear something. Young ears are apt to respond to the mind’s uneasiness quicker than older ones. Jason got up with an air of decision, as he said:

“Come on, boys! Pick up your duds and let’s be movin’.” Then to the newcomers, “Hear or see anything of that bunch we run outen here?”

No, the man had heard nothing in that direction, meaning westward. There were tracks a plenty, but they were made by the running savages. But towards the east—he was plainly alarmed by what he had heard.

Inside of another five minutes the party, falling in behind Boone as was their wont, were threading their course through the undergrowth towards the Trace, intersecting the blazed trail at an angle leading southeastward. Hardly had they struck the trail than a faint sound of shooting was heard by all and, as Eb had announced, still far to the eastward.

“Are ye able to go faster, boy?” asked Jason of Ree who now, fully recovered except for a slight limp, was almost outdoing Boone’s long, steady stride.

“Watch me, Jason!” And the plucky boy

hastened his stride without appreciable effort, whereat the hunter laughed.

“It’s one advantage you youngsters have,” said he. “I don’t think you kin stand more than we’uns, but you git over things a mite sooner.”

There came a half hour or so of rapid tramping, with one or more of the party making short detours on either side, to avoid any possibility of surprise. Meantime no further noises had been heard by any of them. Then, at a junction of two trickling brooks that flowed from slight depressions on either flank of their course, they came upon the body of a dead Indian lying face downward in the shallow waters. Hardly had they stooped to examine him than an undoubted groan from some thick bushes to the left startled them.

Boone had already found a knife sticking in the savage’s back between the shoulder blades. At the same time Small, pointing at the head, slightly lifted it, disclosing a raw, red, scalpless crown.

“Look a’ here!” he said. “What d’ye think?”

Before Boone or the others could make reply, there was a more prolonged groan and a quavering voice mumbled forth:

“Did I git the snake or—or did he git me? Oh-h-h, Gawd!” The voice ceased, but by that time eager hands pushed aside the thick dead vines and undergrowth, disclosing the prostrate form of a white man, garbed as usual among the frontiersmen, and with the insignia of Wayne’s Legion on his cap which lay on the ground where the man had fallen.

Boone, first at his side, dragged him forth into a clearer space nearby, also administering a swallow or so of the same restorative which had reanimated Ree. After a weak gulp or two the man sat up, staring about, his eyes at last resting on the still extended body of the dead savage, the knife still sticking in the back and the red traces of blood smearing that part of the head above water. Then he clutched at his belt, and the others saw that a fresh scalp was

there. Quayle first recognized him as he dropped back, groaning forth something that sounded like:

“Geewhilicker, I—I’m all in.”

“It’s old Sinbad Tucker!” whispered Quayle to Small. “’Member how he always said ‘geewhilicker’? Was his way of swearin’, I reckon.”

While others of the party ranged here and there in search of further signs of fighting, Boone, Kingdom and Small administered restoratives. Presently the man Tucker blinked at them. He singled out Kingdom, and began again:

“Yer comrade—found him? He orter be round—somewhars—you—I mean.”

His tired eyes bent on Ree, who started saying:

“Do you mean John Jerome—the lad I chummed with?”

Tucker nodded, then his lips moved, but no words came forth at first; but at last:

“He—he—stuck that knife inter him. Then

John run. Afore I fell I heard shootin'. Might 'a' got him—"

Thunderstruck, Ree Kingdom almost doubted that he heard.

"What d'ye mean? Is John Jerome, whom I left with the army, *here?*"

Before the dazed man could reply, two more of the party appeared, bearing between them a drooping figure. It was that of John, weak, exhausted, it would seem, yet fully alive.

"John! John!" Ree was running towards him, his arms stretched forth. "Are you much hurt? Are you?"

"N-no. Not much. I—I'm in luck. I—I—I've found you." Then he slipped from the encircling arms and would have fallen but for those who supported him.

CHAPTER XVI

LITTLE WOLF ONCE MORE

After Ree had left the Wayne camp and John was alone, so far as his comrade was concerned, he put a brave face upon the situation. Obviously his first duty was so to live and do as to restore his health and enable him to do the things that soldiers are called on to do without grumbling.

With this end in view he exerted himself to attend to the every-day routine of army life. He drilled, worked, "chored" and was no laggard in any respect.

As to the mare and Neb, he saw to their feeding, currying, and general bestowal so regularly that, when Wayne himself one day made a round of inspection he found John cleaning and bedding his stock in a bush and branch

stable he had himself prepared. He beckoned the boy forward. John came, pitch-fork in hand.

“Are you the young man reported sick from hard treatment by the Indians?”

“I might have been, sir; yet I don’t feel sick at all. Only weak. But I am getting over that.”

“These your animals?” demanded Wayne, knowingly feeling them here and there.

“They belong to my friend and me. He—he went on that raid recently ordered by you, sir. Will they be gone long?”

“How should I know, boy?” Wayne regarded him sharply.

John felt his face coloring but he said nothing. Wayne closely regarded the mare.

“Would you care to sell either or both these animals?” he asked sharply. “I mean for government use.”

“N-no, sir. You see they belong to both of us. We’ve had them all the while we were out there. They brought us here, and—”

"I see, I see." The general smiled comprehendingly. "Well, try and keep them fit and well. We won't be too curious as to how you get your feed."

"Beg pardon, sir!" This as Wayne was about to pass on. "Are you likely to order out men for another raid in the west?"

"Why do you ask? Were you not put aside when your brother—no, your friend, went?"

"Perhaps I was. But that was months ago. I'm well now. I do want to go, sir!"

At this Wayne's keen eyes seemed to John to be asking why. Without pause he went on to explain, while the commander fidgeted restlessly, though plainly interested.

"I—I'm 'feared that Ree may have got into some trouble. The Delawares, the Shawnees and the Mingoes were down on us. All on account of their taking us to be spies, and in touch with your army here. But Ree would go. I wanted to go along, but then I hadn't the strength. So they left me. They were to be back long before now. Winter's mighty nigh

over.” John heaved a big sigh. “If you do send out another party I do really want bad to go. Men here are good and friendly enough—none better. But I’m fairly sick at times for my comrade and friend. If he’s in trouble I want to try to help him out.”

“And perhaps get both of you in deeper trouble.” The General said this half playfully, but his mind was made up. “Until we have news of Boone and his men, or they return, I do not think it best to risk other lives. We will be going ourselves soon, if these killings continue along the Miami River. As soon as the winter breaks a little—hm-m-m-m!—well, we will do something ourselves.”

“Still, General,” John pleaded, “if you did happen to—to—”

“Yes, yes!” Wayne, impatient to go on, was nevertheless touched by the boy’s tone and manner. “If we do, you shall go; but we’re not likely to go at all until the general advance later.” And he passed on.

But John was rewarded in his wish after all.

The monotonous round of drilling, drilling still went on. John was getting so that he loathed it, although he shirked no essential duty. But, "the best laid plans of mice and men"—we all remember the oft quoted saying of Robert Burns.

One day not very long after this a stray hunter from beyond the Muskingum River brought in news of further stirrings among the tribes in that section. Also of another family massacre, dangerously near the settlements along the upper Ohio, not unlike that of the Bush family, but with no back-kick by the whites as was the case we have already related. Instead, the war party went off, presumably to commit further depredations in the neighborhood of what is now Wheeling. This was too near to be silently endured. One morning, a member of the Legion quartered near broke in on John as he was taking Phoebe and Neb down to a nearby run to water them.

"Hey, boy!" called the fellow, whom John knew well. "Now's your chance. We're git-

tin' up another squad—a big one, too. Want to go 'long?'"

The man was one Sinbad Tucker, an old frontiersman whose home was in that neighborhood, whom John and Ree had both visited when first they joined the Legion. Well treated they were. And, later, when John spoke of his uncertainty as to what to do with the two animals, Tucker slapped him on the back and pointed in the direction of his own home a mile or two beyond the rear of the army camp.

"Take 'em over thar and leave 'em with my old woman and the boys. They'll be good to 'em. Look at our farm critturs and look how we'uns see after our own stock. They kin pick round and browse about. The little feed they'll need won't cost ye nuthin'." John's hesitation as to whether it was right to thus impose upon neighborly kindness was misunderstood by Tucker.

"Mebbe you'd ruther sell to the General. He's ready to buy for the gov'ment. But chances be you'll never see your critturs ag'in.

Packin' goods after the army's likely to be hoss killin' work, let alone that they might be shot or taken by the Injuns. Not such a bad thing after the fussin' and fightin's over to know ye've got a good hoss and mule waitin' fer ye back here."

In the end old Sinbad had his way. He was good hearted, kindly, and very hospitable to those he liked. Joining the Legion about the time the boys did, he took to them at once. He had been an old campaigner with both Quayle and Small during the Pennsylvania "Whiskey Rebellion," as it was called.

"Geewhilicker!" Tucker had commented to the boys. "We didn't see much fightin' but we did drink a lot of liquor."

A day later they were under way. The party embraced, including Tucker and John, together with two dozen other experienced frontiersmen, —all under command of one of Wayne's lieutenants, another graybearded borderman, Ronald by name. But though he was gray, a trifle wrinkled and lean, Lieutenant Ronald was fully

up to his duties, for his life since the Revolution had been spent along the border, and he had fought before that from Bunker Hill to Yorktown. As evidence of this he marched them two dozen miles after leaving Wayne's encampment. They crossed the Ohio below Wheeling, intending to cut off the retreat of the raiding party previously alluded to.

Scattering out, yet keeping in close touch, they sent out certain scouts who returned a day or two later, reporting that the Indian war party had turned tail on hearing that Wayne was after them and was hurrying westward. At this time Ronald and his men were considerably to the southwestward of these savages.

It was nearly morning on a clear, frosty night when the last scout returned.

"Can we get behind them, Sin?" demanded the Lieutenant. "Reckon you didn't hear of any other Indians being near?"

"We kin git behind 'em if we move faster'n they do. Thar's another party of raiders somewhere off Goshgoshing way. Don't know how

many, but prob'ly a small lot of 'em. Gee-whilicker! I'm jest honin' for to get at 'em."

"Mebbe you won't hone so bad if they happen to outnumber us much."

"We ain't keerin' so much for that. What we want, Lieutenant, is to do some good fightin' afore our ammunition gits too skase."

"Well, wake the boys up and let's get under way. If grub gets scanty, a few of you will have to scatter and kill a deer or two. But, as you say, we must keep moving—moving lively."

Two hours later, when day broke, John, with another scout—both of whom had been kept well ahead on account of being supposed by Ronald to know this section—returned. According to these, they were within a few miles of the nearest Indian village located not far from where now stands the town of Coshocton. John's comrade already had a red scalp at his belt. It was that of a Delaware warrior, and the red and black war-paint easily made known that he was out on no peaceable work.

“Him and another was sneakin’ ’long under yon creek bank. I reckon they was comin’ our way. I told John to foller t’other one, and I slipped up to where I could down this un with my hatchet. He jest kerlapsed, and I had his ha’r off ’fore he could even holler.”

“Well, Jerome,” Ronald turned to the lad, “how did it happen that you didn’t get the other one? He’ll strike out and let his friends know what we’re up to and where we be, won’t he?”

“I think not,” replied John, whereat Tucker and others frowned dubiously.

“Were you near him—close enough to slip up on him?”

“Yes, sir, I was. But he never let on he knew any one was on his trail. At last he turned to climb the bank and looked up stream to see if his companion was following. I saw I’d have to do something. I—I just couldn’t somehow tackle him, he not knowing I was near. Just then he dropped his gun, and as he bent to recover it I—I hollered for him to give up.

Quickly he jumped. We saw each other. It was light enough."

Ronald was scowling now. Fiercely he demanded:

"Don't you know that if he'd had the same chance at you he would have sunk his tommy-hawk in your head quicker'n a wink?"

"No, sir, I don't. You see, I knew the chap. He knew me, too. 'Stead of fightin' we—we jest shook hands."

"Shook hands? Well, I'll be—be switched!" Ronald glared harder than ever.

"Geewhilicker, boy!" This from old Sinbad, who tried to frown but compromised on a sickly grin, denoting incredulity, dismay.

"It was a boy called Little Wolf, one of a pair who were very friendly to Ree and me back on our place near the Delaware village. While we were there they more than once came secretly to let us know when we were in danger. I knew that I must either do something or let the boy go. My comrade would soon be near, looking for me."

It appears that Little Wolf, after assuring himself that it was John Jerome who was facing him, impulsively took John's hand, gave it the customary shake and, regarding the white lad with a more open friendly glance than ever, told John that he was in danger. A big war party was near, much nearer than any of the white raiding squad supposed.

"How do you know?" he demanded, still retaining Little Wolf's hand and gazing into his friendly eyes closely.

"Me know well. Come from southwest, too many for you." Here the Delaware boy extended and closed both hands five times with fingers extended. It was the common way of conveying numbers to those that understood.

"Over fifty warriors, you say?"

Little Wolf nodded energetically.

"Look here, Little Wolf, you and me are friends." The two again shook hands.

"We must part. When you see Hopocon and Gentle Maiden, tell them from Ree and me that we are sorry to go, but we have to. You won't

say to any one that you have seen Little Pale-face, will you?" Little Wolf shook his head in an emphatic negative. Then he leaned close, saying in native gutturals:

"You no harm Little Wolf; Little Wolf no harm you. As for rest, they kill redman—that different." Then without another word he silently vanished.

Later he rejoined his companion, intimating that his own quarry had somehow gotten away; also saying that he was tired.

"Gosh!" scorned the other jokingly, for he was proud of himself on account of the scalp at his belt. "We might as well go back, I reckon."

As we have said, back they turned. But this was not all. Presently John found chance to get Ronald aside, when he privately made the Lieutenant aware of all that Little Wolf had said, without, however, giving the boy's name.

"You feel sure of this?" queried Ronald suspiciously; for, if he had not himself been put wise to the many intricacies of Indian behavior,

he would have openly flouted the likelihood of this war party of fifty or more. But the lieutenant was no ordinary man in some ways. He now understood that John was more likely to be right than wrong. Still he questioned the boy thoroughly, and at last turned away, saying:

“Both of you are too young for border life in wartime. In a year or two those two redskin lads will be as bad as their elders. As for you,”—he eyed John critically—“if you stay out here through the campaign we’ll have under Wayne, see it through to a finish, you’ll change some. I used to be that way, but I’m not now. I will qualify that yarn of your friend’s. He says there’s fifty; would have you think it was mebbe a hundred. But I’ll say from twenty to thirty; not more. And as we were going towards where they’re coming from, I guess we’ll keep right on.” And so they did, though with increased watchfulness.

CHAPTER XVII

CONCLUSION

The main reason why Ronald chose to keep on his route was that this very day news had come in from another scouting party that the savages generally were now on the retreat to the west. Raids near the Ohio were growing too risky. It was well understood that Wayne would soon advance with a big force. Therefore it seemed wise to all within the zone of the hitherto debatable lands to withdraw towards the Wabash, where an unusually strong force was being gotten together for the final campaign that was bound to come off soon.

But Ronald did not relax his vigilance and the scouts in advance were under orders to keep him well posted as to the best way to avoid a sudden surprise.

Several miles were quickly traveled, all hands looking and listening as best they could. Towards noon a brief halt was made, and the party lunched eagerly off the parched corn and jerked venison of which they still had a supply. Just as they were about to start the one scout still out came plunging through the woods in a half exhausted state.

“Git your guns ready, boys!” he cried. “We’re half surrounded as ’tis! Woods here be so thick with bushes I was almost on some of ’em ’fore I seed any. Ye knows how sly Injuns be when they’re after scalps. Git a hustle on!”

In less than no time, even while the scout was speaking, the others swallowed or pouched the remainder of their food and were scattering.

“Which way and how many?” demanded Ronald. “Can’t be very many.”

But the scout did not know. He indicated the direction and our party, including John Jerome and Tucker, were slipping slowly, slyly through the thick timber in the direction indi-

cated. Ronald, in command, had no intention of avoiding an unknown foe intercepting his route without further investigation.

Finally, in crossing a small stream rather hurriedly, the half dozen men in front were suddenly fired on from an ambush under a low bluff veiled with dense undergrowth. At the same time the well-known war whoop rose up, not only from there, but elsewhere, though apparently distant. Ronald, with the main party, sprang in, and waded across, plunging through the undergrowth up the gentle ascent to where their advance had been so unexpectedly halted. Even he wondered if, unawares, they had stumbled into an ambush on three sides, for the other yells on either side were now nearer. Two of the advance had fallen. One more was wounded, though only slightly. Sinbad Tucker, seeing something, plunged under the low bluff, through the thick shrubbery, and presently emerged with a reeking scalp which he waved at the rest. Then he shouted:

“Geewhilicker, men! I got one! But we’re

mighty nigh s'rrounded. Ef we can't git out, le's make a stand here."

"Looks about the best chance," said Ronald, at the same time sending a couple of old hands on either side to feel of the enemy. Meantime the party that had first fired on the whites, daunted by the fall of one of their number, were fleeing, dodging as best they could, hoping to rejoin their comrades on the flanks. Apparently they knew that safety was not far away so far as this present party of white raiders was concerned. That there might be other whites somewhere near did not enter into the calculations of any, not even the party of pale-faces now so nearly surrounded.

In a few minutes they had dragged their two dead comrades along with them. Old Sinbad, sensing the trouble afar, picked out John, who was crouching near.

"Look here, son," he began, "I want to sneak round yander by that fallen tree top, git to the branch, foller it under the bank, and try and do something to them reds as is on our right

flank. Want to go?" John hesitated, doubting if the move were wise. "Aw, come on! Listen! Hear anything?"

John had heard nothing newly suspicious. His belt trophy had doubtless made the old man unduly eager. Tucker, already creeping off through the bushes, paused; held up one hand, listened intently. Somehow the boy felt an irresistible impulse to follow and a desire not to be outdone in daring by so old a man, one well used to the ways and wiles of frontier woodcraft. Almost before he knew it he too was on hands and knees crawling down the slope amid the shrubbery.

They struck the brook a few score yards above where the advance squad had first crossed, and just above that another small rivulet joined the first. By then the two were perhaps a quarter of a mile from where the main body of their party was now supposedly concealed, doubtless waiting to encounter some mysterious force as yet only known by the ambush that had already robbed them of two of

their number. Old Sinbad raised up cautiously to look. John was then a few yards behind. As Tucker did this, John, to his horror, saw the painted, half naked form of an Indian rise amid the bushes, his hatchet raised to cast. The boy called forth a shrill warning as Tucker turned. Just then the savage whirled, angered by the sight of John, while John's warning waked Sinbad to knowledge of his danger. The hostile hatchet flew, not at Tucker, but at John, the savage following it with a sudden rush upon the youth.

The tomahawk struck John fairly in one side, but the boy already had his gun at his shoulder. Hardly flinching he pulled the trigger. The jar of the blow had unsteadied the aim, and the ball merely sliced the savage's ear.

Not waiting, the boy plunged his knife into the redman who had turned and, in flight, collided with Sinbad who downed the fellow, though weak himself from a wound by the Indian's knife. John's blade was sticking in the Min-

go's back, the boy already being so weak that the weapon slipped from his hand.

Other noises sounded about the boy; his head began to swim strangely. Could it be that the rest of their party were nearer? Guns began to crack; yelling and shouting, plain English shouting, was heard. Roarings inside his brain confused him, and as he strove to move, his legs crumpled under him and he sank to the earth. The next thing he knew two pair of arms were lifting him up, while in his ears came the echo of a well remembered voice.

“Is—that you, Ree?” His lips gasped the words, but no audible sounds came forth, as he felt strong encircling arms enfolding him. At last he managed to enunciate the words at the close of the previous chapter.

Meantime an unwonted battle had indeed raged around that sequestered spot, before the savages, at first outnumbered, had gathered in such strength that the party under Ronald would have suffered severely but for the timely arrival of the other party under Boone. After

that the Indians withstood them but for a few moments. Then they scattered, apparently in every direction, leaving nearly a score of dead or fatally injured behind.

Round and round among the victims went the hardened frontiersmen, enriching themselves with scalps, and using their bloody knives to reinforce the bullets where the sparks of life still lingered. Of such nature was the western warfare at that period. Too many long months of aboriginal outrage had seared the hearts and consciences of the white settlers along the Ohio. It made them feel, as a rule, that the only safe redman was a dead man, satisfactorily dead only when his war-scalp was fast in the belt of the white man. It was only after a day or so of vigorous ranging and scouting through that wooded section that Boone and Ronald, the respective leaders, assured themselves that their red foes had indeed fled further west, like most of the savages had already done. Behind them the spotted trail of isolated burnings, lootings, murderings, left behind from the Mus-

kingum to the Miami, were afterwards to Wayne's men the saddest of findings all that spring and summer. In fact the whole region, now the fairest of all the many fair areas of the mid-west, was then a deserted forest, freckled here and there by these many signs of savage riot, revelry and bloodshed.

For two days the united parties remained bivouacked where the two brooks unite, waiting for John and one or two other desperately wounded men to get strong enough to be moved. Haste being the main incentive, Boone as senior officer sent Ronald with ten picked men on a hurried march to Wayne and the army. The rest, bearing the wounded, John among the number, followed as soon as John could be moved.

After his reunion with Kingdom, nothing would induce him to allow Ree out of his sight. Ree therefore stayed with him. Nor did John's strength return at once. While the hatchet wound healed rapidly, it looked as if his strength, only partially retrieved since his former treatment as a captive, had been worse

sapped than ever. On finally reaching Wayne's headquarters, when the General realized how deep was the mutual feeling between the boys, and considering the services they had already rendered in keeping the army posted as to present conditions among the belligerent savages, he graciously discharged both boys from further service in the Legion.

"Should John get well before we are back," said Wayne to Ree, "both of you will be welcome back again. But take good care of him. I like you both, and he certainly needs his comrade's care. Good-by."

In the end, however, Ree and John went back to the army. Shortly after being removed to Sinbad Tucker's friendly house, John was again taken very sick. Neither boy was lacking in courage or patriotism. John could not go: Ree, under the circumstances, did as Wayne advised, and remained with his more than brother.

He was removed to Fort Pitt and the winter was half over before he was again able to be

out of doors. He regained strength slowly and with the coming of spring he and Ree, mounted on Neb and Phœbe, made the trip by easy stages to Connecticut.

Three years passed before the boys went west again, and along the whole frontier peace reigned supreme. Wayne's victory over the savages at the Battle of Fallen Timbers effectually ended their resistance to civilization's advance in the Ohio country, and never again did a serious outbreak occur in the region named. By the treaty of Fort Greenville in 1796 the extreme eastern boundary between the settlers and the Indians was definitely fixed at the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas rivers and the portage path. It so remained until the treaty of Fort Industry in 1805 when the Indians sold the lands west of the path and the rivers named.

The village of Captain Pipe on the little lake had by this time long since disappeared. As a nation the Delawares were scattered and their numbers were small. Eventually they found homes in a far western reservation.

Although Ree and John never saw the honest, loyal Fishing Bird again, they heard of him as taking a gallant part, on the side of the Indians, of course, in the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Report reached them also of a most bitterly hostile savage who was among the killed in this battle. He fought with his last breath. Though shot twice through the body, he raised himself on his elbow and sunk his knife into a wounded soldier who had fallen near him. That this redskin was Lone-Elk, the Seneca, there can be little doubt.

There is a tradition that the beautiful daughter of Captain Pipe so attracted a young warrior whose admiration she did not like, that he poisoned himself when she rejected his attentions. Another tradition states that Gentle Maiden was cruelly shot by two white men, while walking alone in the woods. I do not know whether these legends are supported by fact, nor do I know if there is any truth whatever in the tradition of there having been a lead mine in the Cuyahoga valley, the existence of which was known only to the Indians.

Return Kingdom and John Jerome did not settle again where their original clearing had been. There was a reason and it was that pretty Mary Catesby, a very early friend of Ree's, having become Mrs. Return Kingdom, was a party to the plans for the permanent removal west. She wanted to be somewhere within reach of neighbors. Woman-like, she had her way, and Ree bought land near Marietta. Where Kingdom was John Jerome was sure to be, and he owned the adjoining farm.

Both the boys, now to manhood grown, were active in the public affairs of the state of Ohio, organized a few years later, and many a day and evening found them together in conference concerning matters of mutual interest. They did not always agree, but it is certain they never quarreled. Their lives were blessed with many quiet joys and even when sorrows came they also were shared and each grief and burden seemed the lighter.

More and more often in later years, as the two went down the sun-kissed slope of lives well

spent did they speak of the adventures of their youth. Maybe John was inclined to brag a little. Some say so. But both were liked by all.

To the end of his days John looked up to Ree as to an elder brother, and if he did brag it was of Kingdom's exploits rather than his own, and the latter was wont to smile, "Well, well! They were days quite brisk enough, and pleasant now to talk about; but in quite a different way the present days are brisker, after all."

THE END

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